

## INTRODUCTION

At her final profession ceremony as the new Carmelite sister Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi had a mystical experience. She had a vision in which she became one with God, her spouse Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. The vision revealed, she later wrote, that Jesus accepted her as his bride:

“Afterwards, since I had offered my heart to Jesus on the vigil of the most Holy Trinity, I knew through the following experience that He had accepted it; for during this morning of the Trinity I saw Jesus, Who returned it to me and together with it, gave me purity of the Virgin Mary, which purity I saw to be so grand that I could never explain it. And after this, Jesus, caressing me sweetly, as if I were a new bride, united me entirely to Himself and locked me in His side, wherein I found a most pleasant repose.”<sup>1</sup>

This vision was only the first of the many she experienced.

As a result, Sister Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi came to play a powerful role at her convent, Santa Maria degli Angeli. Her sisters at the convent were deeply impressed by the mystic who joined their order. They not only heeded but recorded her teachings, which emphasized humility, poverty and chastity. She became Assistant Mistress of the Novices in 1589 and Mistress of the Novices in 1604.<sup>2</sup> After her death in 1607, reports began to circulate in Florence that miracles had taken place at her tomb. Inspired by this evidence of sanctity, her confessor and several of her Carmelite sisters launched a campaign to have her beatified. The Catholic Church

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<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Works of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, Carmelite and Mystic (1566-1607) I* Trans. Gabriel N. Pausback (Fatima: Blessed Nuno House, 1973), 18.

<sup>2</sup> *The Complete Works of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, Carmelite and Mystic (1566-1607) IV* Trans. Gabriel N. Pausback (Fatima: Blessed Nuno House, 1973), 12.

began a two-year investigation in 1624 that culminated in her beatification.<sup>3</sup> After a second investigation, Clement IX (1667-1669) declared her a saint in 1669.

During her lifetime, Maria Maddalena became a model of seventeenth-century female religiosity. She reflected the virtues of humility, poverty, and chastity particularly enjoined upon nuns by the Catholic Church during the Catholic Reformation. The Catholic Reformation sought to improve the behavior of Catholics, including clergy, regulars, and nuns and to educate the faithful on how to exercise this behavior. Reformers such as Martin Luther had attacked the Catholic Church on the grounds that its clergy were unrepentant, arrogant, and lived a life of luxury.<sup>4</sup> Between 1545 and 1563, the Council of Trent, a church council called by Paul III, sought to define proper religious and moral behavior not only for the laity but religious as well.<sup>5</sup> The canons and decrees issued by Trent included reforms directed at nuns concerning their adherence to their vows. Before Trent, nuns had been able to interact freely with other religious orders and their families.<sup>6</sup> Certainly many convents were criticized during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for permitting their

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<sup>3</sup> Damien Joseph Blaher defines beatification as the ecclesiastical approval of cult worship within that region of the religious, *The Ordinary Processes in Causes of Beatification and Canonization; A Historical Synopsis and a Commentary* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University Press, 1949), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther, *Disputation of Dr. Martin Luther on The Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* Edit. & trans. Adolph Spaeth, L.D. Reed, Henry Eyster Jacobs (Philadelphia: A.J. Homan Company, 1915), 30 & 40.

<sup>5</sup> *The Council of Trent: The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumencial Council of Trent* Edit. & trans. J Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), 11.

<sup>6</sup> According to P. Renee Barnstein's study of convent life in sixteenth-century Italy, convents not only contained women from different social classes and backgrounds, but some of the women, such as prostitutes or widows never took final vows. "In Widow's Habit: Women between Convent and Family in Sixteenth-Century Milan." *Sixteenth-Century Journal XXV*, 4 (1994), 787.

inhabitants to converse openly with family members and male religious.<sup>7</sup> According to Catholic Reformation theologians such promiscuity made a mockery of religious vows, [Nuns being promiscuous interfered with their loyalty to their vows of chastity.] One example of misconduct within a convent, concerning a nun's vow of poverty, occurred during this period of reform. The convent of San Paulo in Milan, established in 1535, was not enclosed and the nuns were able to interact with the monks of their brother order the Clerks Regular of San Paulo.<sup>8</sup> Eventually enclosure was strictly enforced and all of the women were required to take final vows. Rather than giving up contact with the outside world, and all their possessions and their inheritances, many left the convent.<sup>9</sup>

The ecclesiastics of the Council of Trent intended that the twenty-fifth session's canons and decrees would oblige nuns to observe more strictly their vows.<sup>10</sup> In November 1563, the Council of Trent declared that nuns were to remain within the walls of the monastery or convent.<sup>11</sup> Each order, however, interpreted this enclosure order differently.<sup>12</sup> The Carmelites strictly observed the decree because they believed that nothing should disturb the sisters from their prayer and religious duties.<sup>13</sup> Papal

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<sup>7</sup> Gabriella Zarri, "Gender, Religious Institutions and Social Discipline: The Reform of the Regulars," *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Longman, 1998), 195.

<sup>8</sup> Barnstein, 792.

<sup>9</sup> Many of these women were elites who still interacted very closely with their families. Other women had independent sources of wealth that they were reluctant to give up. See Barstein, 803.

<sup>10</sup> Zarri, 206.

<sup>11</sup> *The Council of Trent The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical*, 237.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Birely has argued that the Council of Trent wanted to see the enclosure order strictly observed by the nuns. *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700; A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation*. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 1999), 38.

position on enclosure varied also. Urban VIII (1623-1644), the pope who beatified Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, ordered strict observance of the canons and decrees.<sup>14</sup>

During the Catholic Reformation, the Church came to place particular emphasis on a direct spiritual relationship with God. Catholics armed with manuals such as Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* were instructed to meditate frequently on the Holy Trinity.<sup>15</sup> Ignatius of Loyola believed that along with his spiritual exercises, religious imagery depicting these practices would further emphasize religious devotion and would increase the devotion of the faithful who could not read his spiritual guide.<sup>16</sup> Although Loyola intended the *Spiritual Exercises* as a guide for the laity, it emphasizes virtues the Catholic Reformation Church required of its religious: a life of poverty, meditation, devotion to prayer, and humility. These practices were further encouraged to do so with the aid of images depicting Christ's passion.

At the turn of the seventeenth century, there was a surge of mystics claiming to have visions of God and Christ. Those who led exemplary lives, according to Catholic doctrine, were sometimes granted visions of the father, son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup> The Catholic Reformation Church looked back on the exemplary lives of medieval mystics and found much writing worth of emulation. Medieval mystics

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<sup>13</sup>Jodi Bilnikoff, "Teresa of Jesus and Carmelite Reform." *Religious Orders of the Catholic Reformation In Honor Of John C. Olin on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday* Edit. Richard De Molen (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994), 166.

<sup>14</sup> Birely, 38.

<sup>15</sup>Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Exercitia Spiritualia English Trans.* Thomas Corbishley (New York: P. J. Kennedy, 1963), 13, 39, & 40.

<sup>16</sup>Fred S. Kleiner, Christin J. Mamiya, & Richard G. Tansey, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages II*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (United States of America: Harcourt Publishers, 2001) 728.

<sup>17</sup> Grace M. Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 42.

served as examples of the attributes Trent sought to promote.<sup>18</sup> This manifested itself in a belief in the value of physical suffering, a desire to fast, and the hope to receive appearance of the stigmata.<sup>19</sup> Several Catholic Reformation mystics, including Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, claimed they received these wounds during their visions.<sup>20</sup> Many female mystics, also like Maria Maddalena, stated that their visions revealed that God had chosen them to be Christ's holy bride.<sup>21</sup>

Sixteenth and seventeenth-century nuns were encouraged to model their spiritual practices after the behavior of Catherine of Siena. By the turn of the seventeenth century, convents held a culturally constructed idea of feminine religiosity based on ascetic devotion, humility, faith and obedience.<sup>22</sup> The convents promoted these ideas through drawings and paintings of saints, displayed within the convents, who exemplified these ideas. Catherine of Siena, one of the models for Catholic Reformation mystics, fasted and meditated daily.<sup>23</sup> Sixteenth-century nuns learned of Saint Catherine through paintings, which could be understood by the

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<sup>18</sup> Sara F. Mathews Grieco "Models of Female Sanctity in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy." *Women and faith: Catholic religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present* Edit Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 170.

<sup>19</sup>Carolyn Walker Bynum argues that in some medieval convents mystics advocated physical suffering. They deprived themselves of food and they only ate the holy sacrament, "Fast, Feast, and Flesh: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women." *Representations 11* (Summer 1985), 1. Expanding on Bynum's work Rudolph M. Bell argues that these women had the tendency to induce pain on their bodies, including starvation. Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985),19.

<sup>20</sup>Karen Scott, "Mystical Death, Bodily Death: Catherine of Siena and Raymond of Capua on the Mystic's Encounters with God." *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters* Edit. Catherine M. Mooney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 139.

<sup>21</sup>Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages; A Reply to Leo Steinburg." *Renaissance Quarterly* 39, 3 (Autumn, 1986), 414.

<sup>22</sup>Grieco, 160.

<sup>23</sup>Grieco, 169.

literate and illiterate alike.<sup>24</sup> This imagery was a particularly useful way to emphasize these Reformation virtues because many of these nuns were illiterate. The cult of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi later came to rely upon such imagery to encourage the veneration of the Florentine mystic. Mystics manifested these behaviors, advocated by the Catholic Reformation Church and inspired by Catherine of Siena, but unlike the typical nun they took this behavior to extreme levels.

Teresa of Avila (1515 and 1582) was one of the first Catholic Reformation mystics to consciously model herself after Catherine of Siena. She came from a noble Spanish family and she entered the Convent of the Incarnation at the age of twenty. After an illness, she began to experience visions of herself with the Holy Trinity. She described her visions in an autobiography, which she wrote to inspire religious as well as laity.<sup>25</sup> Teresa went on to found a reformed Carmelite order at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Teresa's reforms exemplified the Council of Trent's decrees on convent life. The Catholic Church declared her a saint in 1622.<sup>27</sup> Catholics continued to venerate Teresa through the seventeenth century. This included the commissioning of the sculpture *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa of Avila*, by Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini, for the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. As Teresa had followed in the footsteps of Catherine of Siena, Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's career followed the path laid out by Teresa of Avila. Like the Spanish saint,

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<sup>24</sup>Grieco, 120.

<sup>25</sup>Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 41.

<sup>26</sup> Carol Slade, *St. Teresa of Avila* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 9.

<sup>27</sup>Slade, 132.

she too received visions, sought spiritual perfection and taught her sisters the reforms of the Catholic Church.

Mystics could bring enormous prestige their convents, if they proved to be authentic under the examination of the Catholic Church. While the Church glorified mystics, it carefully investigated those who claimed to experience visions. In some cases, such as that of Bendetta Carlini, studied by Judith Brown, the investigators found that the mystic had falsified her mystical encounters with Christ. Bendetta Carlini of Pescia had claimed that she experienced visions, Christ had proclaimed her his holy bride, and that she physically experienced the stigmata.<sup>28</sup> The consequences for a convent's embrace of having a false mystic lowered the prestige of the convent. The alleged mystic was stripped of her privileges, titles, and respect and she was imprisoned within the convent for the rest of her life.

In keeping with historians, such as Gabriella Zarri and Sara F. Mathews Grieco who have studied Catholic Reformation mystics, this thesis will show that although Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi lived an exemplary religious life, politics still played a powerful role in her canonization. This analysis will examine how forces within her convent, the region of Tuscany, and the Papal State shaped the investigation into the veneration of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi.

Chapter I will examine how Mary Maddalena de' Pazzi's visions and her emphasis on Catholic Reformation reforms at her convent contributed to her beatification and canonization. While several historians have studied the career Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, none have examined how her visions model seventeenth-

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<sup>28</sup>Judith Brown, *Immodest Acts* (New York: Oxford University Press), 28,44, 59, & 72.

century religious beliefs in general and the reforms made during the Council of Trent in particular. In an early biography of the saint, Placido Fabrini devoted little attention to visions or to her teachings. Instead she argues that she was a model of spiritual perfection for Carmelites.<sup>29</sup> Karen-edis Barzman finds that Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi removed images of Christ from small sculptures of the Crucifixion. Pazzi's sisters at the convent witnessed Pazzi's behavior with these religious images. Barzman argues that Pazzi's behavior heightened the impact of her teachings, because these nuns interpreted her actions as evidence of her profound love for Christ.<sup>30</sup> Armando Maggi finds that her visions were part of her subconscious desires to experience passion. He argues that Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi never actually experienced what was occurring in these visions.<sup>31</sup> Historian Antonio Riccardi believes that she reflected Tridentine reforms, but his analysis of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's visions argue that she is a product of Renaissance humanism.<sup>32</sup> [This chapter does not question the validity of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's visions or whether they actually occurred.] Instead this chapter will examine how her visions reflect the values articulated by the Council of Trent, and how her behavior was modeled on that of Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila.

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<sup>29</sup> P. Fabrini, *The Life of Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi* (Philadelphia, 1900) 19.

<sup>30</sup> Karen-edis Barzman, "Cultural Production, Religious Devotion, and Subjectivity in Early Modern Italy: The Case Study of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi." *Annali d' Italianistica: Women Mystic Writers* 13 (1995) 283.

<sup>31</sup> Armando Maggi, "Uttering the Word" *The Mystical Performances of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi: a Renaissance Visionary* (New York: State University Press, 1998), 161.

<sup>32</sup> Antonnio Riccardi, "The Mystic Humanism of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi" *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy* Edit. E. Ann Matter & John Coakley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) 217.

Chapter II will demonstrate how religious images intensified Florentine and Tuscan support for the beatification of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi and analyze the political maneuverings that brought it about. Contemporary biographies reveal that the major support for Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's beatification originated within the local Florentine community rather than in Rome. Her confessor Vincenzo Puccini's biography, illustrated with engravings by Francesco Curradi, drew attention to the nobles from Tuscany and Mantua whose connections to Rome were instrumental in bringing about her beatification.<sup>33</sup>

Chapter III explores Rome's support for the beatification and canonization of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. It analyses the investigations required by the Catholic Church to determine the sanctity of the candidate for veneration and pays particular attention to the testimony offered by witnesses in support of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. This section will further examine the motives of the ecclesiastical officials who campaigned for her beatification. This chapter will argue that Urban VIII's support for Sister Maria Maddalena arose from the role his family had played in her beatification. It will also consider the impact and influence of notable Florentines who continued to support her canonization. Based on the documentations of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's life, biographies written by two of her confessors, and transcripts of the ecclesiastical investigation, this thesis will argue that these political connections made possible Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's beatification and canonization.

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<sup>33</sup> *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, trans. Reverend Father Lezin de Sainte Scholaftique (London: Randal Taylor, 1687) 39.

CHAPTER I  
PASSION AND PRAYER:  
MARIA MADDALENA DE' PAZZI  
CATHOLIC REFORMATION MYSTIC AND TEACHER

Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, a mystic at the convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Carreggi Italy, inspired the nuns and their confessors at her convent at the turn of the seventeenth century. The nuns documented her mystical experiences in *The Complete Works of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*. Her confessor Vincenzo Puccini wrote about her spiritual devotion in the biography, *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, illustrated by Francisco Curradi. These two works demonstrate that Maria Maddalena was a model Catholic Reformation saint. Her life of chastity, humility and a life of poverty followed the decrees handed down by the Council of Trent. Maria Maddalena possessed all the attributes required for canonization by the Catholic Church at this time: an exemplary life, the performance of miracles after death, and a following of religious.<sup>34</sup>

According to the testimony of her sisters at the Convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli, Maria Maddalena's religious behavior modeled and exemplified the reforms made by the Council of Trent. This model behavior inspired the movement to have her beatified and later canonized. Her teachings emphasized many of the ecclesiastical precepts highlighted in the twenty-fifth session of the Council of Trent, such as the vow of poverty. Maria Maddalena was a mystic as well as a teacher. Her visions helped support her morals, for they demonstrated to her sisters that Jesus Christ himself had selected out of all the other nuns. Her religious attributes, her

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<sup>34</sup>Eric Waldram Kemp, *Canonization and Authority within the Western Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 57.

dedication to teaching, and her life as a mystic, documented by her last confessor Vincenzo Puccini and the nuns at Santa Maria degli Angeli, and captured in the drawings of the local artist Francesco Curradi, would help to promote her beatification and canonization. Collected by the nuns at her convent her teachings were published in the seventeenth century, and documented her visions. Her sisters recorded what she experienced during her visions beginning in 1584, her first year at the convent. Maria Maddalena corrected and edited the transcriptions. This section of the thesis concentrates on the following Chapters: “Forty Days of Ecstasy,” her first forty days of mystic visions; “The Renovation of the Church” her letters concerning religious reform to religious officials including Cardinal Alessandro de Medici, and Pope Sixtus I, and to Sister Catherine de Ricci; and “Teachings,” her advice to her sisters on the importance of honoring their vows to God.<sup>35</sup> The nuns found her guidance, letters, and visions important enough to transcribe. Her virtuous life and mystic visions helped to enforce her teachings for the nuns at Santa Maria degli Angeli.

Maria Maddalena was born in 1566 in Florence as Caterina de’ Pazzi. Her family in Careggi was politically allied with the Medici family. She attended the school of Piccolo San Giovanni, where she felt called to devote her life to God. In 1582, The Pazzi family placed their sixteen-year old daughter Caterina in the Carmelite order of Santa Maria degli Angeli located in Florence.<sup>36</sup> This convent

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<sup>35</sup> *The Complete Works of Mary Magdalene de’ Pazzi, Carmelite and Mystic (1566-1607) I*, trans. Gabriel N. Pausback (Fatima: Blessed Nuno House, 1973), 13.

<sup>36</sup> Karen-edis Barzman, “Devotion and Desire: The Reliquary Chapel of Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi.” *Art History*, 15, no. 2 (1992): 173.

accepted the daughters of noble families from across the region of Tuscany.<sup>37</sup>

Caterina took the name Maria Maddalena because of the saint's popularity as a symbol of penitence at the end of the sixteenth century. Her new name also reflected Maria Maddalena de Pazzi's own penitent behavior.<sup>38</sup>

Her sisters began to document her experiences during the first year of her life at the convent, when she spent forty days in ecstasy and began to instruct her sisters in the virtues required of nuns. Appointed Mistress of the Novices in 1589, Maria Maddalena became a well-known mystic within the Florentine community. She became famous in Florence for predicting Cardinal Alessandro de Medici's rise to the Papal throne in 1605.<sup>39</sup>

After Maria Maddalena de Pazzi's death in 1607, her corpse performed several miracles, which contributed to the effort to win her beatification. Many Florentines and visitors from other Italian regions, including Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga of Mantua, began to visit her grave, because her corpse's oils were believed to heal the sick.<sup>40</sup> On one occasion shortly after her death, a sinner visited her grave.

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<sup>37</sup>During the Catholic Church's investigation Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi's beatification, her sisters came from noble Tuscan or Florentine families such as Sister Maria Pacifica of Tovaglia. *Summarium, Actionum, virtutum et miraculorum servae dei Mariae Magdalenae de Pazzis, ordinis carmelitarum ex processu remissoriali desumptorum*, edit. Ludovico Saggi (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1965), 42.

<sup>38</sup> Many sixteenth century women were forced to join convents by their families. The Pazzi family wanted Caterina to marry, but Caterina wanted to join a convent. See Karen-edis Barzman, "Gender, Religious Representation and Cultural Production in Early Modern Italy." *Women of Spirit: Female leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, edit. Rosemary Ruther & Eleanor McLaughlin (NY, 1979), 224-225.

<sup>39</sup> *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, A Carmelite Nunn trans. Reverend Father Lezin de Sainte Scholaftique* (London: Randal Taylor, 1687), 66.

<sup>40</sup> Virgilio Cepari, *The Life of Saint Mary Magdalene de Pazzi* (London: Thomas Richardson and Son, 1847), 377.

According to historian Sara F. Mathews Grieco, the body of Maria Maddalena turned its head away from the sinner, a gesture interpreted to mean that the mystic could not countenance the sinner's imperfections.<sup>41</sup> This miracle was one of the many attributed to her corpse and the miracles convinced seventeenth century Florentines that Maria Maddalena had been blessed with the power to heal by God. The popularity of her cult spread, and it was at this time that Puccini and her sisters began to write about her life. Puccini published the first edition of biography in 1607 and the second edition three years after her death, in 1610. Maria Maddalena's visions, religious predictions, and performance of miracles distinguished her from other mystics. Her behavior appealed to the seventeenth-century Catholic Church that enjoined nuns and monks to honor their vows of chastity, humility, and a life of poverty.

The Catholic Reformation initiated a program to counter the development of new denominations that formed early in the sixteenth century. Protestant theologians challenged the conduct of the clergy, the selling of indulgences, and asserted that most Catholics failed to live penitent lives.<sup>42</sup> Martin Luther's *Disputation on the Power and Efficiency of Indulgences* noted the flaws within the Catholic Church, and partially in response to these critiques Paul III convened the Council of Trent, which met between 1545 and 1564. The council, which consisted of an assembly of cardinals and bishops, sought to deal with the disorder within the Catholic Church as

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<sup>41</sup>Sara F. Mathews Grieco, "Models of Female Sanctity in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy." *Women and Faith : Catholic Religious Life in Italy From Late Antiquity to the Present*. edit. Lucetta Scaraffia, and Gabriella Zarri (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 172.

<sup>42</sup> Martin Luther, *Disputation of Dr. Martin Luther on The Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* Edit. & trans. Adolph Spaeth, L.D. Reed, Henry Eyster Jacobs (Philadelphia: A.J. Homan Company, 1915), 30 & 40.

well as the lack of education of canon law among the masses.<sup>43</sup> Most critically, these reformers decreed that the Church's adherents, religious as well as laity, needed to be taught the basic catechism.<sup>44</sup>

Almost a century before Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi was born, the Catholic Church instituted reforms for its adherents. These reforms not only sought to teach proper religious behavior to all Catholics (including clergy as well as laity). They also strove to explain why the dictates of the church should be followed. The Council wanted to instill a sense of moral obligation and required that all Catholics conform to the requirements of their faith. The clergy were to see that all Catholics received a basic catechism. As Jacob Burckhardt describes in *The Civilization of Renaissance in Italy* the feuding Montagues and the Capulets of Verona, immortalized by Shakespeare, failed to regularly attend mass because they could not take communion without resolving their differences.<sup>45</sup> The church sought to enforce attending mass every Sunday. The pre-Reformation required all Catholics to confess at least and made it obligatory that all be baptized, married and buried by the church.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For Paul III's plan of reform see *The Council of Trent The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and oecumenical Council of Trent*, edit. & trans. J Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), 5&6; For more information on the chaos and disorder of the Catholic Church look at John Bossy, "The Counter Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe." *Past & Present Society*, 47 (May 1970): 55.

<sup>44</sup> Bossy, 59.

<sup>45</sup> Bossy cites this family from Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of Renaissance in Italy*, as an example of Italian nobles neglecting their obligation to God because of their social feud. Several families refused to attend church regularly because of their quarrels with other noble families, 54 & 55.

<sup>46</sup> Bossy, 52.

Since the pope resided in Italy, the Catholic Reformation impacted the beliefs of Italians in particular. The archbishop of Milan, Charles Borromeo, exerted control over the dioceses and the masses by creating a hierarchal structure of fraternities. These fraternities attempted to establish a sense of loyalty to the Catholic Church within Milan and to ensure theology emphasized by Trent was followed.<sup>47</sup> This system helped control the beliefs and behavior of the Catholic laity.

The Council of Trent not only directed reforms towards the laity, but it also created canons and decrees regulating the behavior of nuns within convents. During the Twenty-Fifth Session, all convents were ordered enclosed.<sup>48</sup> (Insert quote) This prevented the nuns from leaving the convent and limited their contact with their families and any other visitors. Trent also reemphasized the importance of honoring their vows.

“It doth enjoin, that all Regulars, as well men, as women, shall order and regulate their lives in accordance with the requirements of the rule which they have professed; and above all that they shall faithfully observe whatsoever belongs to the perfection of their profession, such as the vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity, as also all other vows and precepts that may be peculiar to any rule or order, respectively appertaining to the essential character of each, and which regard the observance of a common mode of living, food, and dress.”<sup>49</sup>

All convents were expected to enforce these decrees and educate their nuns on the importance. Given the church’s emphasis on proper doctrine: exemplary Christian

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<sup>47</sup> Bossy, 59.

<sup>48</sup> *The Council of Trent*, 237.

<sup>49</sup> *The Council of Trent*, 237.

behavior, follows the Catholic reforms and instructs others on these values, female sanctity brought prestige to convents during this time.<sup>50</sup>

Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's convent, Santa Maria degli Angeli, followed these reforms and became well known for the moral sanctity of its nuns. In fact, Maria Maddalena's family selected this convent because of its outstanding reputation.<sup>51</sup> The inhabitants remained were renowned for their chastity, lives of prayer, and isolation from the world. During Maria Maddalena's time within the convent, she too embraced the beliefs of the Catholic Reformation and honored her vows of humility, chastity and obedience.<sup>52</sup>

The Catholic Church's reforms, directed at convents, were reactions to the perception of misbehavior. Women who entered convents during the sixteenth century were frequently upper class women whose families could not afford to marry them off, or whose dowry funds were not large enough to bring a profitable marriage.<sup>53</sup> It was typical for many of these women, especially if the convents were prestigious, to be recognized by their family status within the convent, thus comprising their vows to God. The Carmelite order (which Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi would join) followed a very strict code, a life of withdrawal, poverty,

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<sup>50</sup> Grieco, 160.

<sup>51</sup> *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, 44.

<sup>52</sup> *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, 49.

<sup>53</sup> Kate Lowe, "Secular Brides and Convent Brides: Wedding Ceremonies in Italy during the Renaissance and Counter Reformation." *Marriage in Italy 1300-1650*, edit. Trevor Dean & KJ. P. Lowe (United Kingdom: University Press, 1998), 46 & 47.

preserving austerity and a communal life of prayer.<sup>54</sup> This differed from the actual behavior seen in many convents. Many of these nuns lived the luxurious life of upper-class women. For example at Teresa of Avila's convent, Incarnation of Avila in Spain, many of the nuns brought servants and slaves to live with them. Even Teresa of Avila did not confine herself to the convent and left frequently to socialize.<sup>55</sup>

The Jesuit order greatly influenced Carmelite orders during the sixteenth century. The Order of Jesus was founded by Ignatius Loyola in 1535. As explained in Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, the Jesuits focused on meditation, fasting, prayer, and an ascetic life. Ignatius also emphasized obedience to church authority and the officials within the church. These beliefs were stated by Loyola in the *Rules for Thinking with the Church*: "I will think that the black I see is white if the Holy Mother of Church tells me so."<sup>56</sup>

The traditions of Ignatius Loyola and the Jesuits shaped those of Santa Maria degli Angeli, Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's convent. By 1563, the Jesuit confessor Agostino Campi had worked within the convent for over twenty-five years and he heard the first confessions of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi.<sup>57</sup> The Jesuit priest Alessandro Capocchi emphasized spiritual exercises in his sermons and the convent's library kept copies of his writings. Maria Maddalena's later confessors, Vincenzo

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<sup>54</sup> Jodi Bilinkoff, "Teresa of Jesus and Carmelite Reform." *Religious Orders of the Catholic Reformation in Honor of John C. Olin on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*. edit. Richard De Molen. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994), 166.

<sup>55</sup> Bilinkoff, 167.

<sup>56</sup> Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Exercitia Spiritualia English Trans.* Thomas Corbishley (New York: P.J. Kennedy and Sons), 122.

<sup>57</sup> Maggi, 7.

Puccini and Virgillo Cepari were also Jesuits. Her daily rituals of meditation, prayer, and fasting were also influenced by Jesuit traditions.

During this period, there was a surge in mysticism in Italy and Spain. Mystics sought to honor God through extreme spiritual practices.<sup>58</sup> Many of them fasted daily and they consumed only the Holy Sacrament, believing they could subsist on Christ's body alone. Mystics experienced visions and were able to communicate with Christ and the Holy Spirit. Commonly, female mystics claimed that Christ recognized them in these visions because of their true devotion to him. Some mystics also experienced the stigmata during visions.<sup>59</sup> This surge in mystical practices occurred after Saint Ignatius of Loyola wrote *Spiritual Exercises*, which encouraged Catholics to meditate on Jesus Christ's passions.<sup>60</sup> This writing emphasized the religious practices of fasting, meditation, and prayer. Ignatius, who also experienced visions, became a model of spiritual perfection for the Catholic Church.

For the Catholic Reformation Church, Saint Catherine of Siena, a fourteenth-century mystic, was the model of female sanctity. Catherine ritually fasted, experienced visions, received the stigmata, became Christ's holy bride, cured the sick, wrote numerous letters on spiritual devotion, witnessed to the public and prevailed upon the papacy to return to Rome from Avignon.<sup>61</sup> Pius II canonized her

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<sup>58</sup>Carolyn Walker Bynum, "Fast, Feast, and Flesh: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women." *Representations 11* (Summer 1985), 1.

<sup>59</sup> Carolyn Walker Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinburg." *Renaissance Quarterly* 39 No. 3 (Autumn, 1986), 423.

<sup>60</sup> Saint Ignatius of Loyola, 39.

<sup>61</sup> Karen Scott, "Mystical Death, Bodily Death: Catherine of Siena and Raymond of Capua on the Mystic's Encounters with God." *Gendered Voices. Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters*, edit. Catherine M. Mooney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) 139.

in 1461. Catherine's mystic life served as a model for the Catholic Reformation. Paintings that depicted her visions and showed her as the bride of Christ appeared more frequently during this time period.<sup>62</sup> For example, Crescenzo Gambareli depicted Catherine of Siena speaking to Christ in *Saint Catherine Recites the Holy Office with Christ* (Figure 1).<sup>63</sup> This painting was created in 1607 in Siena for the Basilica of Saint Dominic. Catherine is shown reading to Christ, which represents her mystical marriage, while the heavens and the Pope watch over the figures. Such interactions with Christ was an experience claimed by many Catholic Reformation mystics, among them Maria Maddalena.

Teresa of Avila also became well known for the reforms she instituted at her convent. Teresa joined a prestigious Carmelite convent, in Spain (the Incarnation of Avila) in 1535.<sup>64</sup> At first she lived the same lifestyle as the other aristocratic women at the convent and ignored many of her vows to God such as a leading a life of poverty.<sup>65</sup> Teresa eventually reformed her life however by fully committing herself to her vows of a life poverty, chastity, and humility. After her reform, she experienced many visions. She founded the Convent of St. Joseph in 1560, requiring that nuns there live ascetic lives, devote themselves to the convent, and honor their

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<sup>62</sup> Grieco, 171.

<sup>63</sup> Crescenzo Gambareli, *Saint Catherine Recites the Holy Office of Christ*, 1607, Basilica of Saint Dominic, Siena.

<sup>64</sup> Carol Slade, *St. Teresa of Avila: Author of a Heroic Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), XXI.

<sup>65</sup> Bilinkoff, 168.



Figure 1. Crescenzo Gambarelli, *Saint Catherine Recites the Holy Office of Christ*,  
1607

vows to God.<sup>66</sup> Teresa's reform of the convent occurred in the context of the Catholic Reformation. Like Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila too implemented a life devoted only to God, which was also sought by the church during the Reformation. After she died in 1583, stories began to circulate that her body did not decay.<sup>67</sup> In 1614 she was beatified by Pope Paul V, and was canonized as a saint in 1622.<sup>68</sup>

Like the visions Teresa of Avila had, Maria Maddalena's ecstasies helped her to establish a powerful reputation within Santa Maria degli Angeli. She started to experience her visions in 1585, twelve years after the Council of Trent last met.<sup>69</sup> Her visions continued for forty days. Pazzi was devoted to her vows and spent numerous hours in prayer and meditation, and she ritually took the Holy Sacrament.<sup>70</sup> Sister Veronica, one of Maria Maddalena's sisters at Santa Maria degli Angeli, documented many of her visions. Maria Maddalena explained the meaning of her vision to Sister Veronica and described how these visions brought her closer to God: "During the morning of the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, after I made my profession, I felt myself drawn to know and penetrate the bond and union that I had made with God."<sup>71</sup> Maria Maddalena claimed that she had received God's direct blessing at this time.

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<sup>66</sup> Bilinkoff, 171; Sade, xxi.

<sup>67</sup> Sade, 127.

<sup>68</sup> Sade, 132.

<sup>69</sup> *The Complete Works*; 13; & Robert E. Lerner, Standish Meachman, & Edward Mcnall Burns, *Western Civilization I, thirteenth edit.* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 408.

<sup>70</sup> *The Complete Works*, 17 & 20.

<sup>71</sup> *The Complete Works*, 17.

Maria Maddalena claimed a spiritual authority on the basis of her visions. She stated this authority was granted to her because of her devotion to her vows. In Maria Maddalena's first vision, she claimed that God's approval stemmed from her devotion to her three vows. "And I seemed to see that I was bound to the Most Holy Trinity by three chains, or bonds, which were the three vows that I had promised in my profession."<sup>72</sup> The nuns' documentation of Maria Maddalena's visions and teachings also showed that they too believed that God selected her to be a spiritual reformer.

The nuns who witnessed Maria Maddalena experiencing a vision professed amazement at her behavior. During her sixteenth vision, Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi became so fulfilled with Christ's love that she repeated the word "love" throughout her trance. She praised Jesus repeatedly and she continued to say how much she loved him. The succeeding day, her visions continued and Sister Maria Maddalena expressed her love and devotion to Jesus Christ, calling out, "Love, Love, Love, I shall never stop calling you Love!"<sup>73</sup> Sister Veronica sounded astonished by Maria Maddalena's description of her vision, writing that Maria Maddalena's behavior was more extreme than during the previous vision. The mystic, Sister Veronica wrote, left her bed and grabbed a crucifix from her shelf. Maria Maddalena moved rapidly around the room professing her devotion to Christ. Pazzi kept her gaze upon Christ's wound. "On this day she remained always turned towards the (sacred) side of the image of that crucified (Jesus) that she held in her hand, with the eyes of her mind especially fixed on that true and pleasant place of repose at the side of Jesus".<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *The Complete Works*, 17.

<sup>73</sup> *The Complete Works*, 47.

After her vision ended, Maria Maddalena told Sister Veronica that she saw Christ with his spouses, the nuns at the convent.

Maria Maddalena's exemplary ritual practices included her daily communion. Like all Catholics, they believed the communion wafer was Christ's flesh.<sup>75</sup> Nuns considered overeating an indulgence and some believed that they could receive nourishment only from the holy sacrament, which was their only source of food. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi took communion regularly before her meditations and every vision documented that this consumption occurred before she went into trance. "After I had taken Communion, I stopped to consider the words of Jesus . . ." <sup>76</sup> The Holy Sacrament triggered her fulfillment with the Holy Spirit and she saw Christ appear before her. Her consumption of the host made her meditations more intense and even allowed her to experience visions.

Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi emphasized meditation and prayer as she preached to the sisters at Santa Maria degli Angeli. Spending most of her time each day in meditation and prayer, Maria Maddalena claimed this devotion brought her closer to God. Looking back on her own first vision, she explained why it was important to experience such an intense relationship with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. "And I saw that this bond was so precious that neither its grandeur nor the union that the soul has with God could ever be expressed by human tongue."<sup>77</sup> She also claimed that meditation and prayer would give her sisters a closer spiritual bond,

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<sup>74</sup> *The Complete Works*, 5.

<sup>75</sup> *The Complete Works*, 48.

<sup>76</sup> *The Complete Works*, 34.

<sup>77</sup> *The Complete Works*, 17.

which they could not otherwise receive at the convent. She valued this bond because it filled her with the rapture of the Holy Spirit. She felt it was important for her sisters to fulfill this same spiritual closeness that she experienced with God.

Maria Maddalena received the stigmata during her forty-first vision. Like other mystics including Catherine of Siena, she reported that she felt pain when she received the wounds of Christ. Her wounds, however, were not visible to witnesses after her vision. The stigmata were taken as a sign that she had a true religious gift from God.<sup>78</sup> Maria Maddalena told Sister Veronica that she received the stigmata during her forty-first vision because she had by that time been judged worthy enough to experience the same suffering as Christ. She wanted the strength to stand against the temptation of evil and Christ gave her the stigmata. “And suddenly He gave me all of Himself, I mean his holy humanity together with all his five holy wounds.”<sup>79</sup>

After Maria Maddalena’s first forty days of ecstasy, she wrote Christ praised her humility during the same vision she received the stigmata. She described Christ as excited to see his spouse because she had proved her true devotion to him during her forty days of visions. He appeared to her holding a crown of thorns, which symbolized the Crucifixion, and a crown of flowers. He asked Maria Maddalena which crown she preferred and she replied that she wanted the crown of thorns. “And then, He put the crown of thorns in my heart.”<sup>80</sup> Maria Maddalena’s choice of the crown showed that she wanted to experience the pain and suffering, instead of

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<sup>78</sup>Bynum, “The Body of Christ”, 423.

<sup>79</sup>*The Complete Works*, 24.

<sup>80</sup>*The Complete Works*, 124.

indulging in the beauty of flowers. Humility, she taught, gave her a spiritual closeness with Christ.

Maria Maddalena's assertion that Christ was her holy bridegroom emphasized to the nuns at Santa Maria degli Angeli the importance of their pledge to love only Christ. The Catholic Reformation Churches held that nuns married and pledged their love and devotion to Christ when they made their final profession.<sup>81</sup> Maria Maddalena's visions reveal that she considered herself not only married to Christ, but that she believed she was one of Christ's special brides and she received his love and affection. As she explained in her eleventh vision, "I seemed to see Jesus all-loving, who said to me: "Oh My spouse, why do you think that I wish to unite Myself so often to you? And suddenly I felt that He united me to Himself: and I seemed to understand that Jesus united my soul to himself for three reasons."<sup>82</sup> Pazzi explained that Christ honored her because of her love, devotion, and obedience to him.

Maria Maddalena's personal humility helped emphasize her teachings to the sisters at Santa Maria degli Angeli. In her third vision with Christ, she claimed that she was more humble than her other sisters within the convent. "And as I was in the side of Jesus, I saw therein all our nuns and also many other spouses of Jesus, who were adorning themselves with those gems and were making themselves very beautiful. But I did not take any gems, nor did I adorn myself with them: but I remained there, reposing very sweetly in the Bridegroom . . ."<sup>83</sup> She believed her

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<sup>81</sup> Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints and Society The Two Worlds of Western Christendom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 229.

<sup>82</sup> *The Complete Works*, 31.

<sup>83</sup> *The Complete Works*, 20.

humility made her appear more glorious in the eyes of Christ. In this vision, she resisted wearing the glorious jewels that her sisters wore and also implied that the other brides of Christ should do the same. The Catholic Church emphasized humility as an important attribute the devoted needed to possess, particularly nuns.<sup>84</sup> In her teachings, Maria Maddalena claimed that this attribute revealed a nun's true devotion to God.<sup>85</sup> Confidence and bragging were temptations from the devil. The church held those who exercised true humility, such as Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, should serve as models for other women in convents.

Maria Maddalena was careful to obtain Church approval for her teachings. She wrote to Alessandro de Medici, the Archbishop of Florence, asking him to visit the convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli and to judge whether her visions were legitimate. Maria Maddalena wanted the Cardinal to affirm that she was an authentic mystic.

“Yet come now and see that I am not acting with simulation or duplicity, and that this desire is not one that comes from me or from any other creature. Act as you please, with sweetness or harshness, with justice or with mercy, with hilarity or with severity, with love or with fear—in any way you wish, I mean with me and in my regard, but not with the others—for if only I may see that you want to know the will of God and put it into execution, were I to suffer the pains of hell, it would be paradise for me; but if you put that will aside, paradise would be my hell.”

She not only wanted the Cardinal to witness her visions, but she also wanted to teach the Cardinal about God's will.

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<sup>84</sup>Barzman, “Gender, Religious Institutions, and Social Discipline”, 198.

<sup>85</sup>Judith Brown, *Immodest Acts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 52.

Maria Maddalena sought to reform the entire church hierarchy and not just her own convent. She realized that there were many religious outside her convent who neglected to follow their vows, and sought to abet the Catholic Reformation efforts to emphasize to all religious to honor their commitments to God. She made reform a priority the first year of her life at the convent. The sisters transcribed several letters she verbally communicated during her trances. She addressed these letters to various religious officials concerning the problems within other convents.<sup>86</sup>

Her correspondents included Pope Sixtus I. In a letter to Pope Sixtus I she wrote:

“I am speaking of this great and indissoluble bond that these religious make with God in their power and that you hold. I am speaking of the great and indissoluble bond that these religious make with God in their profession, which bond, especially that of the holy poverty, is so little observed today in the Holy Church that is (as I believe) also your dear spouse. And what is worse (I dare to say it, even though I am the least; and I say it between God and you, His Vicar), such ignorance exists in almost all the principal members of which you are the Head.”

Pazzi pinpointed the fact that there were many ecclesiastics who failed to honor disobeying their commitments to God and that these officials were not just within the convents but also served under the Pope himself.

Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi sought to extend her reforms to other convents in Tuscany. She wrote to Sister Catherine De Ricci of the Venerable Monastery of Saint Vincent at Prato, asking her to provide leadership to the religious who had not honored their commitments to God.<sup>87</sup> She also emphasized that it was the Reverend Mother's duty to educate and lead others to God.

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<sup>86</sup> *The Complete Works*, 45.

<sup>87</sup> *The Complete Works*, 191.

“And you, who carry her name—(Catherine of Siena) a name so worthy, I say because of the privileges that God has communicated both to the one who had it and to the one who (now) has it, the name of Catherine, I say—please be willing like Catherine, to reunite, as if in a chain, our dear Sisters, the disunited brides; and, in the power of the blood of the slain Lamb, pray for so many Christs that they may worthily minister His body and blood! Go on joining together like so many rings in a chain, all creatures but especially those male and female, consecrated to Him!”<sup>88</sup>

In order to assure that Catholic reforms were followed, Maria Maddalena saw it her duty to educate the nuns at Santa Maria degli Angeli. She paid particular attention to prayer, the central part of a nun’s faith. Maria Maddalena instructed her sisters: “Prayer is a way to arrive at perfection, because in prayer God teaches the soul and through prayer the soul detaches itself from created things and unites itself with God.”<sup>89</sup> Pazzi believed, as did Ignatius of Loyola, that prayer would bring these nuns closer to God.

In Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi’s articulated the importance of obedience. “Recognize that being bound by the three vows is a great favor granted by God to those souls that He has called to the religious life.”<sup>90</sup> Pazzi believed that obedience would draw these women spiritually closer to God. Maria Maddalena assumed it was her duty as a role model and spiritual leader to educate these nuns on what commitment to God entailed. She also devoted time in her teachings on living a moral life. Maria Maddalena wanted her sisters to understand how to conduct themselves properly inside the convent and to know that this conduct was a direct

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<sup>88</sup>*The Complete Works*, 192.

<sup>89</sup> *The Complete Works*, 261.

<sup>90</sup> *The Complete Works*, 258.

result of devotion to God. As she explained in the introduction of her teachings, “It is of little help to have a precious jewel and not know its value; so, too, it will do you little good to be a religious, if you do not know the dignity and the value of your state. For if you do not know it, you will not love it, and you will not have the esteem for it that you should.”<sup>91</sup> Pazzi stated that without spiritual guidance, the nuns would never understand the importance of their vows, or obey them.

In a latter passage, Maria Maddalena discussed the importance of a life of poverty, another key virtue noted in the 25<sup>th</sup> decree of the Council of Trent. Pazzi explained that if nuns were truly devoted to God, then all their basic needs would be met.

“You could then truly call yourself a religious when, on going to table, you had nothing to eat; when, wishing to change your clothing or veil, they are not to give you because of the poverty of the religious life. Oh, what great contentment ought then to be yours! For my part, I should consider myself obliged to give my own blood for one who would do me this favor. Be sorry that you do not merit so great a grace from God. And if you do not have these sentiments within you, it is because you do not realize that God gives Himself completely to one that has nothing.”

Maria Maddalena wanted her sisters to accept and even seek out poverty. Her letter is remarkably similar to the council’s decree which laid out the same principle: “The Superiors shall allow the use of moveables, in such manner as that the furniture of their body shall be suitable to the state of poverty which they have professed; and there shall be nothing therein superfluous, but at the same time nothing shall be refused which is necessary for them.”<sup>92</sup> She meant that the sisters should commit

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<sup>91</sup>*The Complete Works*, 245.

<sup>92</sup> *The Council of Trent*, 238.

themselves to a life of poverty and that they needed to give away all their possessions. If these women failed to do so then they were not fully honoring their vows.

Maria Maddalena's teachings also centered on the importance of following the vow of chastity. During the Catholic Reformation, the Council of Trent addressed complaints of the irregular lives of the regular clergy. Many nuns had been caught having sexual relations with men.<sup>93</sup> In 1563, the council ordered female convents and monasteries to be enclosed.<sup>94</sup> Thirty years later, Maria Maddalena explained to her sisters why they needed to remain chaste: "If persons of the world would understand how great are the joys that are reserved in paradise for those who live always as virgins, they would run, like thirsty deer to a fountain, to lock themselves within the harshest communities in order to keep themselves intact and pure."<sup>95</sup> Pazzi noted that it was important to remain removed from the temptations of society. Her moral lesson on chastity can be directly related to the Council of Trent's decision to enclose the convents in the mid-sixteenth century.

Maria Maddalena believed that spiritual exercises strengthened nuns' devotion to God. Like Saint Ignatius, her teachings stressed spiritual exercise and divine worship: "Be humble, fervent and conformed to the will of God, seeking in them not

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<sup>93</sup> Gabriella Zarri, "Gender, Religious Institutions and Social Discipline", 193.

<sup>94</sup> "It appeals, and under pain of eternal malediction, that, by their ordinary authority, in all monasteries subject to them, and in others, by the authority of the Apostolic See, they make it their especial care, that the enclosure of nuns be carefully restored, wheresoever it has been violated, and that it be preserved, wheresoever it has not been violated; repressing, by ecclesiastical censures and other penalties, without regarding any appeal whatsoever, the disobedient and gainsayers, and calling in for this end, if need be, the aid of the Secular arm." *The Council of Trent*, 240.

<sup>95</sup> *The Complete Works*, 258.

your own reputation or your own satisfaction, but only the pure glory of God.”<sup>96</sup> She wanted her nuns to understand how these daily rituals of obedience, chastity and humility affected their spiritual life. Her commitment and devotion to emphasizing these spiritual practices made her stand out from the other nuns.

Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi sought for the religious to be active in charity work. Charity was an act that helped praise and honor the world God created. She believed that it was important for the nuns “to place charity before yourself.”<sup>97</sup> She further explained that this would bring the nuns closer to the divinity. “To fulfill the obligation of perfection, it is sufficient to that God for it; but if you can honor Him in a more sublime way, why should you not do so?”<sup>98</sup> She explained that without such fulfillment, they would not be as spiritually connected with God as they could be.

As had the nuns’ documentation of her letters, Puccini’s biography noted same the decrees of the Council of Trent that Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi had emphasized. The Carmelite order believed in strict enclosure, a life of poverty, and a life of simplicity.<sup>99</sup> These virtues, Puccini noted, were the same as those emphasized by the Council of Trent during the Catholic Reformation, which was strictly observed by the Carmelite orders at the turn of the seventeenth century.<sup>100</sup> Puccini argued in his biography that Maria Maddalena exemplified these very attributes.

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<sup>96</sup> *The Complete Works*, 259.

<sup>97</sup> *The Complete Works*, 266.

<sup>98</sup> *The Complete Works*, 267.

<sup>99</sup> John Bilinkoff, 166.

<sup>100</sup> *The Council of Trent*, 237.

“Scarce had she finished the seventeenth year of her age, and the first of her religious profession, but God was willing to lay in her solid foundations of humility, poverty, and Evangelical austerity, to raise thereupon the tower of Christian perfection, whole utmost point reaches to heaven, and approaches to perfect union.”<sup>101</sup>

Puccini wanted members of other religious orders as well as the laity to know that Maria Maddalena observed the laws of the Catholic Church and that she followed the strict rules of the Carmelite order as reaffirmed by the Council of Trent. Her strict observance of these rules along with the fact that she was a mystic, Puccini argued made her a candidate for beatification and canonization.

*The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi* Puccini added Francesco's Curradi's illustrations in 1610 in the second edition. Like the nuns' documentation of her moral life, the engravings included scenes depicting Maria Maddalena's life, noting her exemplary virtues. Curradi's image of her showed that the artist wanted to reflect the values that were central to Maria Maddalena's teachings. The images reflected Puccini's portrayal of Maria Maddalena's humility.<sup>102</sup> In Plate 58, Maria Maddalena is depicted eating a meal in the refectory (Figure 2).<sup>103</sup> To emphasize Maria Maddalena's humility, Maria Maddalena is shown sitting in the middle of the room on the floor eating her food with her hands, unlike the other nuns eating their meal at the tables.<sup>104</sup> She is the focus of the drawing, because she is by herself. In the

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<sup>101</sup> *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, 49.

<sup>102</sup> *The Council of Trent*, 237.

<sup>103</sup> Francesco Curradi, *Plate 58*. “Vita della Santa Madre” 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

<sup>104</sup> Piero Pacini transcribed the original inscriptions written under each plate within the biography. These transcriptions explain what was occurring in each plate. “Contributi per l’



Figure 2. Francesco Curradi *Plate 58* “Vita della Santa Madre.”, 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

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iconografia di Santa Maria Maddalene de' Pazzi.” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* Vol. XXVIII/3. (1984), 311.

background of the refectory is a ray of light, possibly symbolizing God's blessing. All the other nuns are around the tables and many of them are looking at her.

*The Complete Works of Mary Magdalene de Pazzi* and *The Life of Mary Magdalene de Pazzi* thus reveal that her fellow religious found Maria Maddalena a model of Catholic reform. Her visions and stigmata offered proof that God had singled her out. Maria Maddalena's letters to ecclesiastical leaders revealed that she wanted to prove her obedience to the Church hierarchy but at the same time encourage church leaders to emphasize these reforms to the religious. Pazzi's teachings to the sisters at the convent model the decrees of the Council of Trent. Puccini noted her spiritual perfection and her commitment to her vows in his biography. Curradi's images also spoke eloquently about her virtues made her stand. These accounts from Maria Maddalena's life would later help to spread her popularity among the powerful political families of Tuscany, who soon took an interest in having her beatified.

CHAPTER II  
THE DEVOTED CONFESSORS:  
FLORENCE'S PUSH FOR THE PUBLIC VENERATION OF MARIA  
MADDALENA DE' PAZZI

Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's confessors: Vincenzo Puccini and Virgilio Cepari, helped to establish her reputation among the Florentines. Confessors held a great deal of influence over the promotion of the saints' veneration because they formed close relationships with their parishioners. The role of the confessor was to act as spiritual advisors to both lay people and religious, but in many cases it was mystics gave advice to their confessors.<sup>105</sup> Maria Maddalena's two confessors played an important role in getting the mystic beatified by the Catholic Church. Puccini's actions significantly influenced her popularity among Florentines and the Gonzaga of Mantua. Ultimately, the Florentine artist Francesco Curradi, who lavishly illustrated the second edition of Puccini's biography, printed in 1610, aided her confessor in their task. Cepari's biography further revealed that the Catholic Church did not seek Maria Maddalena's beatification until 1624 under the reign of Urban VIII, under the investigation by Cardinal Orsini.<sup>106</sup> Paul V was therefore the one who did not want to have Maria Maddalena beatified and that was not supportive of the Florentine community's efforts to have her so recognized.

After Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's death in 1607, her third confessor Vincenzo Puccini started documenting her life in order to help spread her popularity among the Florentines and the region of Tuscany. He sought to show that Maria Maddalena devoted her life to God and emphasized the reforms of the Catholic Reformation

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<sup>105</sup>Judith Brown, *Immodest Acts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986),198.

<sup>106</sup> Cepari, 383.

Church to her convent Santa Maria degli Angeli. At the turn of the seventeenth century, mystics brought power and prestige to their convents and they also improved the ecclesiastical reputation of their cities.<sup>107</sup> Puccini attempted to spread Maria Maddalena's popularity among Florentines in three ways: through printed text, through imagery, and through private correspondence. Thanks to Puccini's tireless efforts, the beatification and the canonization of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi acquired religious and political support among the regions of Tuscany Mantua, and the Papal State.

Part of the confessor's role, as articulated in the Council of Trent and by the Jesuit Order, was to educate Catholics on proper Christian behavior.<sup>108</sup> Confessors to those whose virtuous lives could serve as examples to the faithful therefore penned biographies of their exemplary parishioners. The Catholic Reformation Roman mystic's, Ludovica Albertoni, biography was written by her confessor shortly after her death in 1533.<sup>109</sup> It was a means for Catholic clergy to emphasize her model spiritual practices.

The Jesuits, Vincenzo Puccini and Vergillo Ceparì served as spiritual advisors to Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. Their role within the convent would have greatly influenced Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi.<sup>110</sup> During this period of Catholic reform, the church enjoined all laity to follow the guidance of their confessors. As Ignatius of

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<sup>107</sup> Brown, 35.

<sup>108</sup> John Bossy, "The Counter Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe." *Past and Present*, 47 (May 1970), 55.

<sup>109</sup> Karen Perlove Shelley, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death: The Blessed Ludovica Albertoni and the Altieri Chapel* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 5.

<sup>110</sup> Brown, 198.

Loyola had emphasized obedience to papal authority and the church hierarchy, Maria Maddalena also would have followed these principles.

Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi performed many miracles that abetted her candidacy for sainthood. Art Historian Piero Pacini, who studied the art of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi created in veneration of the mystic, examined Puccini's and Curradi's use of religious imagery to promote Maria Maddalena's beatification. However, he did not examine Puccini's emphasis on the Medici family in the biography, now Curradi's deliberate inclusion of powerful political figures in his illustrations.<sup>111</sup> Puccini's biography and Curradi's illustrations include references to the mystic's prediction of Alessandro de' Medici's rise to power. The Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga of Mantua visited her tomb because miracles were reported to occur there. Curradi also showed the Cardinal's participation in promoting her cult in.<sup>112</sup> In addition to Curradi's visual testimony in art, Maria Maddalena's second confessor Virgilio Cepari actually witnessed her beatification and documented her following among noble Florentines in his biography on the mystic, *The Life of Saint Mary Magdalene de Pazzi*. Cepari too drew to the Duke of Mantua's interest in the

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<sup>111</sup>Piero Pacini, "Deposit of Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi." *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* XXVIII/3 (1984) 173.

<sup>112</sup> Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga was the Duke of Mantua. He wrote letters to the pope requesting that Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi be beatified. See "Quod Fama Sanctitatis Eius Semper Crevit et Crescit Continuo Eiusque corpus cum veneratione asservatur veneraturque Ab Utriusque sexus Christianis Qui Se Orationibus et Intercessioni Commendant" *Summarium, actionum, virtutum et miraculorum servae dei Mariae Magdalena de Pazzis, ordinis carmelitarum ex processu remissoriali desumptoru*, Edit. Ludovico Saggi (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1965), 184; Ludwig Pastor noted that Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga and Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici worked closely with Pope Clement VII in *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol 24*, (Wilmington: Consortium Books, 1978), 72, 148, 195, 266, 469, 515.

beatification of Maria Maddalena and described how he persuaded the Archbishop of Florence Alessandro de' Medici to petition for her beatification.<sup>113</sup>

Florence and the region of Tuscany needed to support Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi if they wanted the Catholic Church to approve her beatification. In the case of any quest for beatification or canonization, local support from the candidate's region needed to exist before the Catholic Church would approve an investigation. The beatification and canonization process required a petition compiled by people of "noble character" sent from the region to the Sacred Congregation of Rights, which consisted of the pope's cardinals.<sup>114</sup> If this ecclesiastical committee approved the petition, then it was sent to the pope for the approval of an investigation into the life of the candidate.

Vicenzo Puccini's biography singled out four attributes of Maria Maddalena that he believed made her worthy of beatification: promoting the life of the mystic; the prestige of her family and their political connection to the Medici; her prediction of Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici's rise to power; her exemplary life as a nun; and the fame of her convent. In writing about these aspects of her life, he attempted to persuade Florentines that Maria Maddalena should be granted beatification status within the region of Tuscany. Puccini noted that these writings circulated among members of the elite such as Marie de' Medici, who became the Queen of France.

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<sup>113</sup>Virgilio Cepari noted that the Duke of Mantua was formerly Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga, *The Life of Saint Mary Magdalene de Pazzi* (London: Thomas Richardson and Son, 1847), 377.

<sup>114</sup>Damien Joseph Blaher, *The Ordinary Processes in Causes of Beatification and Canonization; a Historical Synopsis and a Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1949), 20.

Marie acquired one of the first copies that included a small copper engraving of Maria Maddalena by Francesco Curradi of Puccini's biography on the title page.<sup>115</sup>

The second edition of Puccini's biography in 1610 included 86 illustrations, by the artist Francesco Curradi.<sup>116</sup> Curradi, a Florentine artist, painted many frescoes at the convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli. He strove to promote the mystic's popularity by emphasizing in each drawing the qualities Puccini had noted in his writing. Like the biography's author, Curradi stressed her devotion to her vows, her prestige within the convent, her prediction of Alessandro de' Medici's rise to power, and the convent's political connections with powerful Florentines. The artist also celebrated the mystic's miracles performed after her death.

Puccini's biography included considerable information regarding Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's family connection to the Medici of Tuscany. He did not merely document the mystic's own history, but he also paid tribute to her family and its political status. In the introductory paragraph, Puccini described her family's elevated status. "Her Father was called Camillo, Son of Gary [de' Medici], Lord of Pazzi, and her mother Mary, daughter of Laurence, Lord of Boudelmont, both being of such illustrious houses."<sup>117</sup> Puccini further stated that the Pazzi were one of the elite families of Florence.<sup>118</sup> The Pazzi were also prominent within the region of Tuscany and were affiliated with the Grand Duchy of the Medici during the second

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<sup>115</sup>Pacini, "Depositum", 175.

<sup>116</sup>Pacini, "Depositum", 178.

<sup>117</sup> *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, trans. Reverend Father Lezin de Sainte Scholaftique (London: Randal Taylor, 1687), 39.

<sup>118</sup>Puccini's reference to the Pazzi's in this section stated "As they call Great in Florence" *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, 39.

half of the sixteenth century. The Medici appointed Maria Maddalena's father Camillo Governor of Cortona, Arezzo, and Volterra.<sup>119</sup> Puccini noted her father's service to the Medici. "Signore Camillo her father was obliged for the service of his Prince and the Republic to make a voyage to Cortona."<sup>120</sup>

Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's social status added to the reasons why Florentines should venerate her memory. Although Puccini emphasized the Pazzi status, his celebration of status differs from the beliefs of the Carmelite order, which had attempted to make social status reforms under Teresa of Avila at the convent of Saint Joseph in Spain during the mid fifteenth century. Teresa believed that a social status should not be a factor in her admission into Carmelite convents because retaining status interfered with the religious vows of humility and poverty taken by nuns. Teresa's reforms influenced the seventeenth-century Catholic Church. Despite these reforms, Puccini still found Maria Maddalena's social status an important quality to present to the noble Florentines whose support he sought.

Puccini emphasized Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's connection to powerful Florentines such as Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici. He noted Pazzi's prophecy regarding Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici that she had made on September 29, 1586.<sup>121</sup> Alessandro became the Archbishop of Florence in 1574. He was Cardinal under Gregory XIII and Clement VIII and in 1605, succeeded Clement VIII as Pope

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<sup>119</sup>See endnote 4 on the Pazzi family in Karen-edis Barzman. "Devotion and Desire: The Reliquary Chapel of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi" *Art History* 15, (no. 2, 1992)

<sup>120</sup> The Prince to whom Puccini refers to is the Medici ruler. See *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, 42.

<sup>121</sup> *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, 66; For the date of the prediction see Virgilio Cepari, *The Life of Saint Mary Magdalene de Pazzi* (London: Thomas Richardson and Son, 1847, 86.

Leo XI.<sup>122</sup> Maria Maddalena predicted that Alessandro would become pope and she also predicted that his power would not last very long. In keeping with her prediction, he died shortly after his election. Puccini connected the former pope to Maria Maddalena and Alessandro's service to the Papal State "to whom our Saint had predicted that he should be promoted to the sovereign throne of the Church. That, which was not difficult to foresee, since his excellent qualities called him to it."<sup>123</sup> By connecting Maria Maddalena to Alessandro, Puccini hoped to draw support from the former pope's political connections.

Like Puccini, Francesco Curradi also emphasized that Maria Maddalena de Pazzi had been a part of Cardinal de Medici's life. The thirty-sixth image in his series on *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi* shows the arrival of Alessandro de Medici at the convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli (Figure 3).<sup>124</sup> Sara F. Mathews Grieco argues the inclusion of Alessandro de' Medici in Curradi's illustrations was because Maria Maddalena had predicted his rise to power.<sup>125</sup> Sister Maria Maddalena is the prominent focus of this image, as well as Cardinal de Medici.<sup>126</sup> The engraving

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<sup>122</sup> Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol. 25* (Wilmington: Consortium Books, 1978), 5; Pastor also documented that Alessandro de' Medici assisted Pope Clement VII on numerous occasions throughout the reign of the Pope, *The History of the Popes, Vol 24*, 72, 148, 195, 266, 469, 515.

<sup>123</sup> *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, 66.

<sup>124</sup> Francesco Curradi, Plate 36. "Vita della Santa Madre", 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

<sup>125</sup> Sara F. Mathews Grieco, "Models of Female Sanctity in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy." *Women and Faith : Catholic Religious Life in Italy From Late Antiquity to the Present*. edit. Lucetta Scaraffia, and Gabriella Zarri (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 173.

<sup>126</sup> Piero Pacini transcribed the original inscriptions written under each plate within the biography. These transcriptions explain what was occurring in each plate. "Contributi per l'

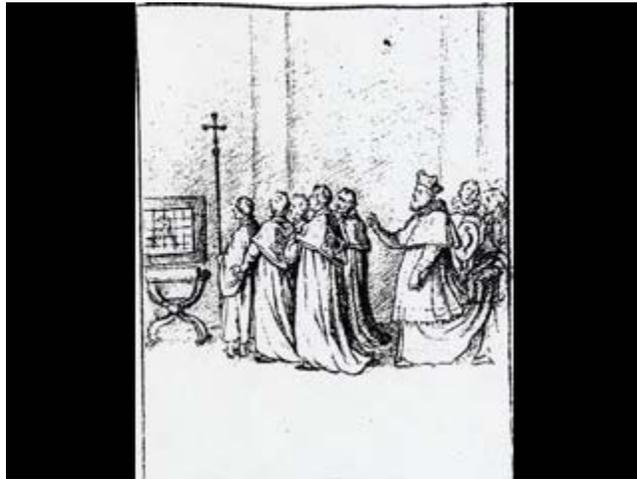


Figure 3. Francesco Curradi *Plate 36* “Vita della Santa Madre.”, 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

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iconografia di Santa Maria Maddalene de' Pazzi” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* Vol. XXVIII/3 (1984), 303.

shows the arrival of Cardinal de Medici at Maria Maddalena's cell. The picture shows a procession of holy men towards Maria Maddalena's cell followed by the Cardinal who is distinguished by his biretta. The procession of men and the Cardinal have directed their focus towards Maria Maddalena. As a sign of his approval of her sanctity, Cardinal Alessandro's right hand is giving her a blessing in this image. In the background are two aristocrats, distinguished by their dress. Although the figures within in the illustration are looking towards the mystic, the cardinal stands out as important figure within the drawing. This illustration attempts to elevate the status of Maria Maddalena by verifying her political affiliations with the Medici family.

Francesco Curradi's illustrations also celebrate events such as the performance of miracles at Maria Maddalena's tomb. The performance of miracles after death was one of the requirements for canonization in the Catholic Reformation Church.<sup>127</sup> Curradi noted this in his illustrations, because to be considered for beatification or canonization the Catholic Church required proof that miracles were performed after the candidate's death. Instead of focusing on the miracle, Curradi's engraving depicts Maria Maddalena's tomb, his focus was not directed towards the miracles. After Maria Maddalena's death in 1607, many ailing Tuscans, including Ferdinando Gonzaga of Mantua, visited her grave and claimed that they had been healed.<sup>128</sup> In Plate 89, the subject is the arrival of Signore Cardinal Gonzaga at her

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<sup>127</sup> Eric Waldram Kemp, *Canonization and Authority within the Western Church*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 57.

<sup>128</sup> Karen-edis Barzman, 173.

tomb (Figure 4).<sup>129</sup> The Cardinal visited her tomb with Cosimo de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany.<sup>130</sup> Curradi's drawing focuses on the arrival of Cardinal Gonzaga at Maria Maddalena's tomb before the miracle occurred, and he depicted the focus on Alessandro de' Medici.<sup>131</sup> The Gonzaga family was connected politically to the Medici family of Florence, and Cardinals Alessandro de' Medici and Ferdinando Gonzaga were both closely affiliated with Clement VIII.<sup>132</sup> In the group to the left, Cosimo de' Medici, distinguished by his aristocratic dress, is seen leading the deputation. To his right is Gonzaga in the robes of the Cardinal. To the right of the group and in the background is the tomb of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. Although Maria Maddalena's miracle is ostensibly the subject of the plates, the central focus is on Cardinal Gonzaga and thus the Gonzaga connection to the Medici family. This image showed that a powerful political family connected to the Medici, themselves venerated Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi.

It is evident that Francesco Curradi wanted Alessandro de Medici and Cardinal Gonzaga of Mantua to stand out prominently in Plates 36 and 89, but in his other illustrations, such powerful political religious figures were not his central focus. Plate 3 depicts Maria Maddalena's installation into the convent (Figure 5).<sup>133</sup> Maria Maddalena kneels before the cardinal and in the background are an abbess and two

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<sup>129</sup> Francesco Curradi, Plate 89 "Vita della Santa Madre", 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

<sup>130</sup>Cepari, 186 & 187.

<sup>131</sup>Piero Pacini. "Contributi per l' iconografia", 322.

<sup>132</sup> Barzman, 173.

<sup>133</sup>Francesco Curradi, *Plate 3* "Vita della Santa Madre", 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

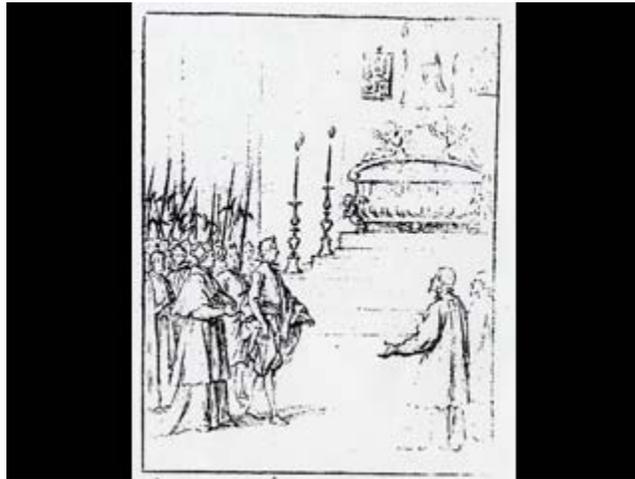


Figure 4. Francesco Curradi *Plate 89* “Vita della Santa Madre”, 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

aristocrats.<sup>134</sup> The focus of the image is Maria Maddalena. The cardinal's presence in Plate 3 is not as prominent as Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici's in Plate 36. Curradi included cardinals in two other scenes in *The Life of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi*, but the central focus of these images is always on the nun. In Plate 87, Father from the Assembly of Jesus and an aristocrat visit the tomb of Maria Maddalena (Figure 6).<sup>135</sup> Her body lies on a stretcher and a torch has been placed in each of the corners. The Father from the Assembly of Jesus and the aristocrat are standing next to Maria Maddalena.<sup>136</sup> The focus of the image is on Maria Maddalena's corpse and not on the Father from the Assembly of Jesus or the aristocrat. Curradi evidently sought to have Alessandro de' Medici and Ferdinando de' Gonzaga stand out in the plates, as other ecclesiastical officials within the series remain in the background.

Although Puccini noted Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's political status, he put significant emphasis on her exemplary spiritual behavior. In his account of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's life, he emphasized her spiritual connection with Christ. He claimed that God had chosen her as soon as she was born. Puccini's introduction states that she was selected by God to be a virtuous woman, "He had loved her, and had chosen her for his spouse from her Mother's womb."<sup>137</sup> He recognizes her divine authority, an attribute that mystics and saints (such as Teresa of Avila) were said to possess.

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<sup>134</sup> Piero Pacini. "Contributi per l' iconografia", 292.

<sup>135</sup> Francesco Curradi, *Plate 87* "Vita della Santa Madre", 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

<sup>136</sup> Piero Pacini. "Contributi per l' iconografia", 321.

<sup>137</sup> *The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, 39.



Figure 5. Francesco Curradi *Plate 3* “Vita della Santa Madre”, 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence

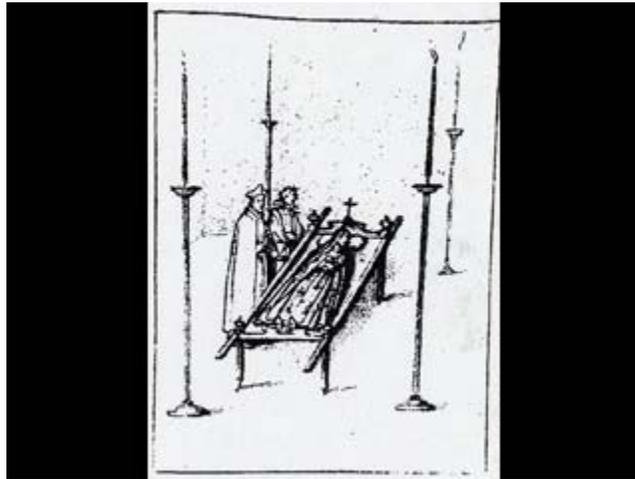


Figure 6. Francesco Curradi *Plate 87* “Vita della Santa Madre”, 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence

Francesco Curradi also included illustrations showing her exceptional religious devotion to God. His engravings recreated the mystic visions documented by the nuns at her convent. These images reflected Maria Maddalena's spiritual connection with Christ showing her speaking directly with Christ. Curradi depicts Christ's gift of his blood to Maria Maddalena (Figure 7).<sup>138</sup> As a symbol of his sacrifice, the Lord appears to Maria Maddalena and gives her blood from his wound. In the drawing, the nun kneels before Christ with her hands stretched out toward him as a sign of her devotion.<sup>139</sup> As in her vision, a stag, the Christian symbol for purity and solitude, is drinking from the blood.<sup>140</sup> Even though the rising inclination of the ground from lower right to upper left make Christ appear above her, the artist places the nun on the same plane as Christ in these drawings. This plate stresses her connection with God, and thus argues that she spoke directly to Christ in her visions.

Puccini wanted to include proof of Maria Maddalena de Pazzi's position of influence at her convent, Santa Maria degli Angeli. In 1598, she became mistress of the novices and held this position until 1604.<sup>141</sup> The Catholic Church emphasized a nun's role within the convent and the notoriety that comes with the title of "Mistress of the Novices" during the Catholic Reformation.<sup>142</sup> Her leadership position revealed

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<sup>138</sup> Francesco Curradi *Plate 24* "Vita della Santa Madre", 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

<sup>139</sup> Piero Pacini "Contributi per l' iconografia", 299.

<sup>140</sup> In the Christian religion, the stag also is an enemy of the serpent or Satan. See Clare Gibson, *Signs and Symbols* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1996), 100. *The Complete Works of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, Carmelite and Mystic (1566-1607)* Volume I, trans. Gabriel N. Pausback . (Fatima: Blessed Nuno House, 1973), 18.

<sup>141</sup> Barzman, 173.

<sup>142</sup> *The Council of Trent The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and oecumenical Council of Trent*, edit. & trans. J Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), 242.

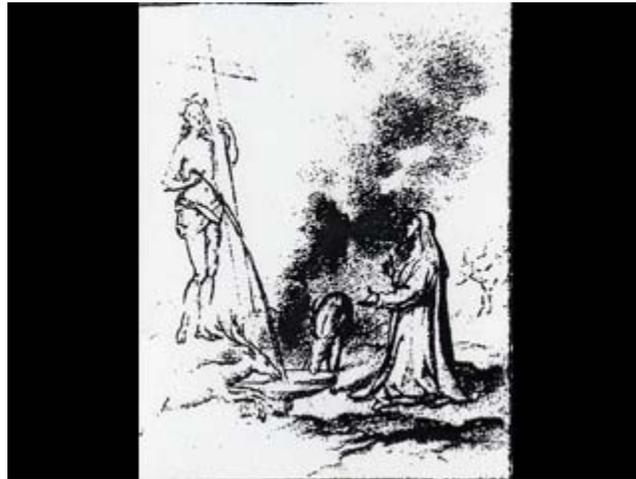


Figure 7. Francesco Curradi *Plate 24* “Vita della Santa Madre”, 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

that religious officials respected her, and the position gave her more authority within the convent and more interaction with the ecclesiastical community. Puccini's biography stated that she was quite young to receive this honor. "She was of twenty years of age when they trusted her with the government of the convent, without the least apprehension of her wants or misguidance, discretion, or wisdom, for a charge following as is over the Novices, and those who professed."<sup>143</sup> Puccini noted her age, because most abbesses (or mistresses of novices) were not elected until they were around the age of forty.<sup>144</sup>

Illustrations depicting Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's position of authority within the convent persuaded Florentines that God supported her promotion. Francesco Curradi depicted Maria Maddalena's appointment as Mistress of the Novices in 1598 in Plate 74 (Figure 8).<sup>145</sup> In this scene, the Mother of the Convent promotes Maria Maddalena to headmistress. The two women face each other and behind them is an angel carrying a ladder.<sup>146</sup> The angel symbolized God's blessing, and the ladder symbolized the way to heaven.<sup>147</sup> Maria Maddalena held a similar role of leadership within her convent as other mystics such as Teresa of Avila. Her appointment as mistress of the novices made her candidacy for sainthood even stronger.

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<sup>143</sup> *The Life of Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi*, 61.

<sup>144</sup> Most nuns appointed to this position were over the age of forty. Brown, 41.

<sup>145</sup> Francesco Curradi *Plate 74* "Vita della Santa Madre", 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

<sup>146</sup> Piero Pacini. "Contributi per l' iconografia", 317.

<sup>147</sup> In Genesis 28 vs. 10-17 Jacob's ladder symbolizes the way to heaven.



Figure 8 Francesco Curradi *Plate 74* “Vita della Santa Madre”, 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

Vicenzo Puccini felt the significance of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's choice of Santa Maria degli Angeli as her convent needed to be noted. He claimed she had selected Santa Maria degli Angeli over another convent, Picolo Croce because the nuns at the former convent lived a pure life and were spiritually closer to God. "In the first, the nuns were so modest and so chaste, that they never unveiled themselves before men; that which infinitely pleased our young Gentlewoman: the others [her future sisters] lived so happily, that they were permitted to approach every day the table of the angels: and these later carried her."<sup>148</sup> A convent's purity was of special concern during the seventeenth century because of the perception that most convents were corrupt during the previous century. Many of the laws concerning the behavior of the religious created during the Council of Trent that concerned the reputation of convents. A convent's reputation could help or hurt the prestige of the city, as had Bendetta Carlinni, who brought shame to her convent and her city when an ecclesiastical investigation proved she was a false mystic. Many religious, including Maria Maddalena, were deeply concerned about the ecclesiastical reputation of their city.<sup>149</sup> Puccini's emphasized the convent's purity to show that Maria Maddalena lived chastely and surrounded herself with spiritually devoted women. Puccini wanted Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's convent recognized as the most prestigious convent in Florence. If a mystic proved to be virtuous enough to be either beatified or canonized, that mystic's convent gained prestige and notoriety. After Teresa of

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<sup>148</sup>*The Life of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, 44.

<sup>149</sup>*The Complete Works*, 145.

Avila died, the convent she founded, Saint Joseph, became a model for other convents in Avila.<sup>150</sup> Similar fame came to Santa Maria degli Angeli after Maria Maddalena's beatification in 1626. Her convent received more prestige and donations, increasing the popularity of the convent and attracting the daughters of noble families.<sup>151</sup>

Curradi's presentation of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi depicted her life of penitence, another attribute enjoined by the Reformation Church.<sup>152</sup> After the Council of Trent, ecclesiastical officials attempted to emphasize female sanctity by looking at paintings of female saints Catherine of Siena and the penitent Maria Maddalena.<sup>153</sup> Both these women were models of penitent behavior, which was what Maria Maddalena aspired to be.<sup>154</sup> Many churches in Italy commissioned paintings of these two to emphasize their humble, and penitent lives.<sup>155</sup> Such works were displayed in convent chapels as a way to stress model behavior to the illiterate. In his images, Curradi depicted Maria Maddalena with qualities similar to those of well-known female saints who appeared on convent walls.

Francesco Curradi presented Maria Maddalena as having the same status as saints in this biography. In Plate 16, the artist drew Maria Maddalena's vision where

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<sup>150</sup> Jodi Bilinkoff, *The Avila of Saint Teresa: Religious Reform in a Sixteenth Century City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 192.

<sup>151</sup> Brown stated the higher the dowry requirements were at the convent, the more prestigious the convent was in the city, 35.

<sup>152</sup> Grieco, 164.

<sup>153</sup> Saint Mary Magdalene is depicted as the penitent Magdalene in art, and is usually seen emaciated with very long hair.

<sup>154</sup> Grieco, 170.

<sup>155</sup> Grieco, 160.



Figure 9 Francesco Curradi *Plate 15* “Vita della Santa Madre”, 1610,  
Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

Christ crowned Maria Maddalena in the presence of the Virgin Mary, Saint Augustine, Saint Francis and Saint Catherine of Siena (Figure 9).<sup>156</sup> This scene, like the *Coronation of the Virgin*, shows Maria Maddalena kneeling towards Christ as he places the crown of thorns on her head. To the right of Christ is the Virgin Mary proceeded then by Catherine of Siena. Saint Catherine looks as if she is pointing at Maria Maddalena, saying that she is worthy of this honor. In this image, Maria Maddalena is shown as worthy enough to receive a ceremony in the presence of other religious who lived outstanding virtuous lives devoted to God.<sup>157</sup>

Puccini's and Curradi's emphasis on Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's prediction of Alessandro de' Medici rise within the Papacy was one of the crucial reasons why the mystic was beatified. During the investigation of Maria Maddalena's spiritual prophecies in 1624, several of her sisters as well as her second confessor Virgilio Cepari testified that she had predicted that Alessandro de' Medici would become pope. These nuns claimed that in the archives of Cardinal de' Medici the former pope left letters documenting Maria Maddalena's prophecy. Sister Evangelista, Sister Maria Pacifica, Sister Maria Catherine Chelli, Sister Maria Vincentia Dati testified that the Cardinal himself had documented this prediction.

“In this monastery. When the prediction of Cardinale de' Medici to become pope and as pope he would live a full year. No sooner said than done the Cardinal went as ambassador for Clement VIII to France. When the letter, written a year that I did not record, during the death of the Cardinal, his statement of the full conversation in 1593,

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<sup>156</sup> Francesco Curradi, *Plate 16* “Vita della Santa Madre.”, 1610, Careggi Carmelite Monastery, Florence.

<sup>157</sup>Piero Pacini, “Contributi per l' iconografia”, 296.

and with the unveiling of the truth for very many during this of her life.”<sup>158</sup>

Curradi’s illustration of Cardinal Gonzaga and Cosimo de’ Medici’s visitation to Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi’s tomb became part of the witnesses’ testimony of the fame of the mystic during the Catholic Church’s investigation. Several of the nuns from the convent mentioned this visitation. Noble Florentine Sister Maria Benedecta de Cambini’s testimony included this visitation.

“There were many who arrived, every type of men and women who venerated the corpse, especially when it was exposed in the church. Before the burial and when our most illustrious Monsignor Cardinal Gonzaga, now duke of Mantua, on this occasion, there were so many people examining the corpse, that was necessary to close the church and to put a guard in place. Also the Church could not hold the people. This was the state during the Serene Grand Duke Cosimo’s visitation to the corpse and his brothers, along with the Serene Arch Duchess and madam, the Serene Ferdinando II and many other princes and noble men and especially the frequent visits from the serene grand duchy.”<sup>159</sup>

This testimony revealed that many members of the Florentine nobility venerated Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi even before her official beatification. This support from the nobility drew other Florentines to visit tomb.

Puccini wrote his biography on Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi during the pontificate of Paul V. After Alessandro de’ Medici’s death Camillo Borghese became Paul V. The Borghese family had more political connections than the Medici among the College of Cardinals. The elected pope and his family exercised the

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<sup>158</sup> “Interrogata iuxta interrogatoria articulos concernentia, scilicet de scientai et causa scientiae, respondit.” *Summarium, actionum, virtutum*, 169.

<sup>159</sup> “Duodecimus testis Reverenda Mater Soror Maria Benedecta De Cambinis, nobilis Florentina, monialis velata eiusdem monasterii Sanctae Mariae Angelorum, annorum 39; examinata ubi supra; in processu remissoriali, fol. 141.” *Summarium, actionum, virtutum*, 187.

power and influence during the pope's reign and the Borghese family was from Siena hence Paul V expressed little interest in promoting Florentines.<sup>160</sup>

Although the Borghese family did not beatify Maria Maddalena de Pazzi, Paul V did beatify other mystics. During his reign the Catholic Church was still investigating the authenticity of Teresa of Avila's mystic experiences and her spiritual writings. The Church's investigation had begun under Clement VII in 1604 and the papacy's investigation continued under Paul V.<sup>161</sup> In 1614, Paul V granted Teresa of Avila's beatification which allowed the country of Spain to officially venerate her memory.<sup>162</sup>

During the reign of Paul V Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's second confessor, Virgillo Cepari, also strove to have her beatified. He documented her life and also noted which noble Florentines were involved in trying to have her beatified and canonized by the Catholic Church. After the canonization of the mystic in 1669, his biography was published.<sup>163</sup> Cepari's biography, *The Life of Saint Mary Magdalene de Pazzi*, documented the religious and political figures involved in the campaign for her beatification by the Catholic Church, and also described who was interested in her canonization. Cepari's biography mentioned the Florentines who promoted Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's life, particularly after numerous witnesses testified that

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<sup>160</sup> Wolfgang Reinhard, "Papal Power and Family Strategy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." *Princes Patronage, and the Nobility: the court at the beginning of the Modern Age c. 1450-1650* (London: Oxford University Press, 1991) 329 & 334.

<sup>161</sup> Carol Slade, *St. Teresa of Avila: Author of a Heroic Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 128.

<sup>162</sup>Slade, 132.

<sup>163</sup>Cepari, preface.

miracles were being performed by her corpse. He explained that there were several accounts of miracles performed by the oils at her grave, such as the one witnessed by Signora Maria de' Rovai. She later attested that Maria Maddalena's corpse had healed her illness.<sup>164</sup> Signora Maria de' Rovai reported in 1607:

“Signora Maria de' Rovai who for sixteen months had been confined to her bed by continued fever, was so much reduced as to be unable to turn in her bed, and was advised to recommend herself to the saint, then recently dead. She took a bunch of flowers which had touched the body of the Saint, and applying it to her stomach, recommended herself to her prayers. She fell asleep, and on awaking found herself in a short time completely free from fever and debility.”<sup>165</sup>

According to Cepari's account, miracles continued to occur at Maria Maddalena's grave years after her death. Several people, such as Signore Giovanni Battista, traveled to her grave and asked the mystic to heal them. Cepari stated that:

“On the contrary many remedies had been used by Signore Giovanni Battista Rossi, but without giving him any relief whatever, as he was continually attacked by pains in the heart, with violent palpitations. He perspired, fainted, and raved in such a manner, as to excite extreme compassion in those who heard him, and saw him so tormented. He promised to carry a silver heart to the tomb of the saint, [Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi] and to perform some devotions in her honor. No sooner had he made the vow, than the saint heard him favorably, for the pain of the heart instantly ceased, and he was never after liable to those dangerous attacks.”<sup>166</sup>

Cepari claimed that many religious officials petitioned Paul V for Maria Maddalena's beatification. The Duke of Mantua, Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga, he wrote, had visited her tomb and wanted to see the mystic beatified. Ferdinando

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<sup>164</sup> Cepari , 377.

<sup>165</sup> Cepari , 377.

<sup>166</sup> Cepari, 382.

Gonzaga wrote to Signore Alessandro Marzi de Medici, Archbishop of Florence, in 1610 to gather support for her beatification.<sup>167</sup> Several nuns from her convent also testified to the sanctity of Maria Maddalena. There were eight witnesses to her sanctity and miracles of her life. The Bishop of Florence presented this evidence to Cardinal Alessandro de' Orsini, who officially investigated beatification claims for Paul V:

“In 1610 Lord Cardinal [Gonzaga of Mantua] decided to write to Monsignor Alessandro Marzi de' Medici, Archbishop of Florence, giving him his (the Pope) permission to make the first process of information. Monsignor, the Archbishop lost no time, and in 1611 made a full process of a hundred and eight witnesses to the sanctity and miracles of the admirable servant of God, which was forwarded to Rome, and presented to the Sacred Congregation of Rites<sup>168</sup> by whom the revision was committed to Signor Cardinal Orsini.”<sup>169</sup>

Vicenzo Puccini also communicated with Cardinal Alessandro de' Orsini about the veneration of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. After the publication of his biography in 1610, he wrote several letters to the Vatican seeking to have her beatification approved.<sup>170</sup> Despite Puccini's many attempts over the next ten years, her beatification was not approved. In 1618, he received a letter from Cardinal Orsini in responding to Paul V's disinterest in the mystic. The Cardinal wrote that it was not a good idea at the time.

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<sup>167</sup> Cepari , 383.

<sup>168</sup> Gabriella Zarri stated that the Sacred Congregation of Rites, a committee formed in 1588, examined investigations on candidates for beatification. The committee also needed to approve the investigation in order for the religious to be beatified or canonized. “From Prophecy to Discipline.” *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to Present*, edit by Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri. (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), 111.

<sup>169</sup> Cepari, 383.

<sup>170</sup> Reinhard, 334.

“Very Magnificent and Reverent Signore, I see how offended you are regarding the Vatican State’s decision to oppose the act of honoring the life of Maria Maddalena de Pazzi. I think it [her veneration] is worth the time and place and yet, the Vatican State and that Mother possess the authority. And they [the Vatican State] think that her veneration would not be the best way to conserve this woman’s memory. And the Vatican State understands your mind and heart. From Rome on 23 of February 1618.”<sup>171</sup>

Other ecclesiastical officials were aware of the dispute between Puccini and Cardinal Orsini over Paul V’s decision to deny Maria Maddalena’s beatification. On February 22, 1618, Cardinal Andrea Giocondi, who served under Paul V, wrote a letter to the Reverend Mother of Santa Maria degli Angeli regarding Puccini’s displeasure with Orsini. During Giocondi’s explanation of the process of commissioning art for the beatified, the cardinal stated that there were numerous requests to have mystics beatified and that Rome needed to be selective about whom they saw worthy enough to receive this title.

“In many illustrations on altars, the patrons want the people to be painted showing piety, naturally with many appendices or similes. More here in Rome and for there are many bodies beatified and non beatified seen in church images and burials. And (these figures are) with infinite vows and marks of miracles. And they are thankful to even have a following. For half in particular, in the other many are not even nominated.”<sup>172</sup>

Giocondi’s letter revealed that there were numerous requests to have mystics depicted in art, once they were granted beatification. This document explained how

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<sup>171</sup>Cardinale Alessandro Orsini, “AM, filza A n. 21: lettera su 2 fogli; sul recto del primo: “Lettere in favore di alcune opposizioni fatte sopra la vita della B.M.M.M Pazzi: intestazione”, “Al Molto Mag. e Rev. signore Vincenzio Puccini, Firenze” Quoted in P. Pacini, “I depositi” di Santa Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi”, 236.

<sup>172</sup>Andrea Giocondi “lettera su due fogli, indirizzata” quoted in P. Pacini. I “depositi” di Santa Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi.”, 237.

competitive the beatification process was and that it was normal for the Catholic Church to deny most of these requests.

Vicenzo Puccini's letters demonstrate that Florentines supported Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's public veneration, despite Rome's disinterest. He communicated with many ecclesiastical officials in Rome to find a way to have Maria Maddalena's beatification approved. On March 3, 1618 Friar Bernardino Eremita, of the Maria monastery, wrote to Puccini offering advice. The letter acknowledged Paul V's resistance. Friar Bernardino noted that the pope was resistant to Puccini's request, but the Friar himself supported Maria Maddalena's beatification. "The desired title of Beatified that with your increasing honor and glory that the truth from your Saint's life and from the abundance of miracles that she performed daily; well then the Vatican State must have had other reasons for not approving her beatification."<sup>173</sup> Bernardino believed Rome's motives for denying Puccini's request were not because the mystic did not possess the attributes worthy of sainthood. His response to Puccini's letter shows that some religious officials, believed that Maria Maddalena's life should be recognized. While Maria Maddalena's life was sufficiently worthy to receive veneration, Paul V refused to beatify her. Only when her cult gained political support in the Eternal City would Florentines win their saint.

Puccini attempted to promote Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's canonization through her biography and his barrage of letters to Catholic officials made Florentines and church officials aware of her virtuous life. The Medici and Gonzaga families played a crucial role in writing the petition needed to have a candidate considered for beatification. Although their attempts failed to beatify thy mystic failed during the

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<sup>173</sup>AM, Filza A, n.21 due fogli inestati, 237.

reign of Paul V, their persistent promotion of her cult finally bore fruit when Pope Urban VIII granted her the title “Blessed” in 1626.

CHAPTER III  
TO ROME: THE BEATIFICATION AND  
CANONIZATION OF MARIA MADDALENA DE' PAZZI

After the death of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi in 1607, Florentine political and ecclesiastical figures launched a campaign to beatify her. In 1626, Urban VIII beatified the mystic and began a second investigation to have her canonized. However, she was not canonized until the reign of Clement IX, sixty-two years after her death. Papal officials, such as the Barberini family, with connections (whether political or familial) supported Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's beatification, but the impetus to have her canonized came only from Florentine's and those with loyalties to Urban VIII.

Famous during her lifetime for having predicted Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici's rise to the papal throne, Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi attracted a considerable following for her teachings on the virtuous life. Her fame spread throughout Tuscany after her death and a number of miracles, was reported to have taken place at her tomb: her veil cured the ailments of Signora Maria Rovai, who had been confined to her bed.<sup>174</sup> Her teachings, writings, and life documented by her fellow nuns and her confessor, Vincenzo Puccini, promoted her life among noble Florentines such as the arch-bishop of Florence, Alessandro de' Marzo de' Medici. Several influential noble Italians, including Ferdinando Gonzaga of Mantua, witnessed the miracles performed by her relics and sought to have mystic beatified by the Catholic Church around 1610. The movement was led by her confessor Vincenzo Puccini, Alessandro de' Marzo de

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<sup>174</sup> Father Virgilio Cepari, *The Life of Saint Mary Magdalene de Pazzi* (London: Thomas Richardson and Son, 1847), 378.

Medici, and Ferdinando Gonzaga.<sup>175</sup> Gonzaga wrote to the archbishop of Florence insisting that he should write a petition on Maria Maddalena's life and the performances of miracles after he death.<sup>176</sup> Along with this, Alessandro began to solicit the testimony of witnesses from her convent in 1611 in support of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's beatification. However, the current pope, Paul V, never ordered an investigation. The Florentines remained persistent and Vincenzo Puccini wrote numerous letters to the pope's cardinal, Alessandro Orsini, wanting to know why Paul V was not interested in beatifying the mystic.

Through the eleventh century the Catholic Church canonized candidates directly; there was no intermediate stage of veneration.<sup>177</sup> The beatification process became a formal part of the canonization process only during the twelfth century. Beatification was an intermediary step; it allowed the public veneration of a religious [within the religious' geographical region] who displayed exemplary spiritual behavior. Veneration allowed memorial altars and images to be created and worship of the beatified to be conducted, only within that region. Beatification thus became one of the steps toward canonization for all later saints.

The process of beatification began when respectable members from the community of the candidate petitioned the Pope to beatify their candidate.<sup>178</sup> Given

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<sup>175</sup> Cepari, 383.

<sup>176</sup>Cepari, In order for the Catholic Church to begin an investigation on a candidate for beatification, a petition needed to be drafted by the bishop from that region, 383.

<sup>177</sup> Eric Waldram Kemp, *Canonization and Authority within the Western Church* (London: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1948), 59.

<sup>178</sup> Damien Joseph Blaher, *Process and Causes of Beatification and Canonization a historical synopsis and a commentary* (Washington D. C: Catholic University Press, 1949),20.

community support, the Pope was required to form a committee of cardinals and bishops to investigate the candidate's sanctity. This entailed an inquiry into his or her life, death, and influence on others. The Church held that the candidate must possess specific qualities such as heroism, outstanding virtue or qualities possessed by the earliest saints, such as Saint Catherine.<sup>179</sup> The investigating officials interviewed those who had known the candidate, witnessed the alleged miracles. The committee created a report on the authenticity of those miracles and then presented their evidence to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, a committee of Cardinals selected by the pope that reviewed the beatification committee's investigation. If the Sacred Congregation of Rites believed the candidate should be beatified, then the committee presented the report to the pope. With the pope's final approval, a candidate was beatified.<sup>180</sup>

During the thirteenth century, Pope Gregory IX declared that the only licit means to declare someone a saint was through the Catholic Church's process of canonization. After a religious had been granted the title of beatification, the pope could then order a further investigation, deny the request, or approve the evidence presented in the report.<sup>181</sup> Once the pope approved the investigation, the reports were drafted and summarized. The pope and his cardinals reexamined the summaries to decide whether the candidate should be canonized. Then the ecclesiastical committee reviewed the summaries from their investigation of the candidate. The pope

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<sup>179</sup> Alison Jones, *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Saints* (Hertfordshire: W&R. Chambers), 1992, 1.

<sup>180</sup> Blaher noted that the Sacred Congregation of Rites is part of the Pope's council, 21.

<sup>181</sup> Blaher, 21.

presented this evidence to the Sacred Congregation of Rites.<sup>182</sup> The religious hierarchy, consisting of the Pope and the Sacred Congregation, then chose a date to hold the beatification or canonization ceremony and announce the pope's decision.<sup>183</sup> During this ceremony, the pope recites the *Veni Sancte Spiritus* or a religious hymn, and then declares the candidate to be a saint and then appoints the saint a feast day.

Throughout history, the Catholic Church valued certain qualities from their saints at certain times. The church has always required the candidate's corpse, relics, or oils to perform miracles after his or her death, which was seen as a sign of devotion from God.<sup>184</sup> The early church declared martyrs saints, such as Saint Sebastian. In the premodern era, each pope held different standards for the qualifications of sainthood. The Catholic Church ordained some saints, such as Saint Anthony or Saint Francis, because they founded orders. Other saints died defending their Christian faith or lived exemplary Christian lives.

The saints beatified and canonized by the Catholic Church during the seventeenth century exemplified the Catholic Reformation virtues. These saints were noted for reforming the behavior inside their convents, and monasteries, living humble lives and for instructing religious on Catholic Church reforms. Paul V canonized Francesca de' Ponziani and Carlo Borromeo and beatified Ignatius of Loyola, Isidore the Husbandman, Teresa of Avila, Philip Neri, and Francis Xavier.

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<sup>183</sup> Blaher, 21.

<sup>184</sup> Jones, 1.

The next pope, Gregory XV, canonized them.<sup>185</sup> Like the other candidates canonized during the seventeenth century, Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, who also emphasized Catholic reforms, stood out as a qualified candidate for sainthood.

During the Catholic Reformation, the church reformed its canonization process. In 1588, the church created the Sacred Congregation of Rites, an established hierarchy that had to approve the candidate's beatification or canonization along with the pope.<sup>186</sup> The committee consisted of cardinals who examined the candidates for beatification and canonization.<sup>187</sup> The establishment of a committee, made canonizations and beatifications were now approved by two religious hierarchies instead of one hierarchy<sup>188</sup> Urban VIII's reforms made the declaration of a beatified or canonized religious a more sacred title as well as a harder title to obtain. He made the canonization process stricter in 1625. He officially declared these decrees in *Caestis Hiersalem Cives* on July 5, 1634. These canon laws prohibited the veneration or publication of miracles or revelations of anyone not already beatified or canonized by the Catholic Church.<sup>189</sup> Consequently, cults were not to be formed until after the candidate was granted beatification. Despite his decree, Urban VIII did not forbid the

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<sup>185</sup> Gabriella Zarri, "From Prophecy to Discipline." *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to Present* edit. Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), 110.

<sup>186</sup> Zarri, 111.

<sup>187</sup> Blaher, 29.

<sup>188</sup> Judith Brown. *Immodest Acts*. New York. Oxford University Press, 1986, 198.

<sup>189</sup> Kemp, 145.

already established cults around nonbeatified religious, such as that of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi.<sup>190</sup>

Support for the beatification and canonization of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi started in Rome during the pontificate of Urban VIII. Florentines began to campaign for her beatification in 1610. Although Paul V beatified another Carmelite, Teresa of Avila, he refused to consider Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi for sainthood. Paul V, of the distinguished Borghese family of Rome, directed his interested towards canonizing other religious, including Ignatius Loyola. In 1621, Gregory XV, of the Ludovisi, succeeded Paul V, canonized Teresa of Avila in 1622. The Catholic Church began an investigation into Maria Maddalena in 1624 a year after Urban VIII ascended the throne of St. Peter. He came from the Barberini family a successful merchant clan in Florence. He became a cardinal and served as the Papal Nuncio in France for Paul V.<sup>191</sup> Although Urban VIII came from Florence, the dominant family in that city, the Medici did not support his election to the papal throne, because he competed with a Medici relative for the papal seat. The Gonzaga, however, did support his election.<sup>192</sup> The Medici family supported Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's beatification and they were key promoters of her cult. The tension between the Barberini and the Medici may have hurt Urban's support for Maria Maddalena. The Gonzaga family also promoted her beatification, and the Gonzaga were allied with

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<sup>190</sup> Blaher, 31.

<sup>191</sup> Judith A. Hook, "Urban VIII the Paradox of a Spiritual Monarchy" *The Courts of Europe: Politics, Patronage, and Royalty, 1400-1800* (New York: Crown Publishing Inc., 1977), 218.

<sup>192</sup> Ludwig Pastor, *This History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages 28* (Wilmington: Consortium Books, 1978), 6 & 7.

the Medici and the Barberini. Despite this tension, Urban showed loyalty to promoting the veneration of this mystic.

Until Urban VIII came to power in 1623, ecclesiastical officials refused to beatify Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. Despite the efforts of Alessandro de' Marzo de' Medici and Ferdinando Gonzaga, who had created the petition to have her beatified and organized witnesses in 1611, Paul V refused to beatify her. In 1624, Cardinal Alessandro Orsini, who had been in communication with Vincenzo Puccini since 1618, began to investigate the evidence supporting her beatification. Orsini came from a distinguished Roman family that was related to the Medici.<sup>193</sup> Maria Maddalena's biographer Ceparì claimed that Orsini was not devoted in the beatification earlier because he was working on religious affairs outside Rome. This was one of the reasons why previous requests for her beatification had been denied by Paul V and Gregory XV.<sup>194</sup>

The first procedure in the beatification of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi required the selection of an ecclesiastical committee to carry out the investigation. Cardinal Orsini assigned Signore Giovanni Battista Coccino, Signore Alfonso Mazanedo, and Signore Filippo Dirovano from Rome to the investigation. The Archbishop of Florence and Canons Andrea del Tovaglia and Alessandro Strozzi of Florence investigated depositions about her life and the performance of miracles after her

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<sup>193</sup>Ludwig Pastor noted that Paul V wanted to please the Grand Duke of Tuscany by promoting his son Carlo de' Medici and another relative, Alessandro de' Orsini, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, 25 (Wilmington: Consortium Books, 1978), 335.

<sup>194</sup>Ceparì claimed that Paul V had assigned him to affairs in Urbino. He could not assist in the promotion of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi before this, because he was not in Rome, 383.

death.<sup>195</sup> As Catholic procedure dictated it also included an investigation of the corpse of the saint to examine the authenticity of her miracles.<sup>196</sup>

A majority of those who testified on Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's behalf came from Florence. Orsini, a distant relative of the Medici, organized this second effort. The investigation committee interviewed her sisters from the convent, her confessors, Vergillo Cepari and Vincenzo Puccini, and noble Florentines. The investigation process identified the relationship of the witnesses to Maria Maddalena.<sup>197</sup> During the investigation, the officials examined all aspects of her life. Witnesses were called to testify on each aspect of her life including her spiritual prophecies, her death, her sanity, her knowledge of the canon laws, other religious devotion to her memory, and the miracles performed during and after her life.<sup>198</sup>

The examiners inquired into Maria Maddalena's family background and religious upbringing as well. The committee was particularly interested in her father, Camillo de' Pazzi, had been appointed governor of Cortona, Arezzo, and Volterra by the Grand Duchy of the Medici, and her mother Maria Boudelmont, and how they raised their daughter. Several sisters from Maria Maddalena's convent testified that she came from a noble home and that she received Christian education. The

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<sup>195</sup> Cepari, 384.

<sup>196</sup> Cepari, 384.

<sup>197</sup> Investigators documented this information in case the candidate was proven to be a fraud. For the witnesses' testimonies in support of Maria Magddalena de' Pazzi's beatification see *Summarium, Actionum, virtutum et miraculorum servae dei Mariae Magdalenae de Pazzis, ordinis carmelitarum ex processu remissoriali desumptorum* edit. Ludovico Saggi (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1965), 177.

<sup>198</sup> Witnesses also testified on the sanctity of her childhood, her precious virtues, her entrance into the Santa Maria degli Angeli, her faith, her hope, her love of God, her regular observance of her vows, her life of poverty, her chastity, her obedience, her devotion to prayer, her mortification, her life of humility, her moral virtues, *Summarium, Actionum, virtutum et miraculorum*.

ecclesiastical investigation considered her families' honor, reputation, and nobility an important attribute to her canonization.

The committee accepted as valid testimony on Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's authenticity from Florentines who described events they could not have witnessed. This revealed that the committee supported her validity, and were lenient with the candidate's actual relationship to the witness. The Reverend Mother, Sister Maria Pacifica of Tovaglia (a region of Tuscany) was one of the witnesses who testified on the behalf of the family's status.

“I know that the status of the child brought into this world, Monsieur Camillo de' Pazzi and Madonna Mary Boudelmont, noble Florentines and they were legitimately married. And the wife was a Catholic Christian woman of a virtuous life and custom. And it is also in their daughter Catherine, that to the religious is named Sister Maria Maddalena, who was baptized at the baptistery of St. John in Florence, confirmed and educated in piety and obedience at Saint Mother's Catholic Church.”<sup>199</sup>

The ecclesiastical records documented Sister Maria Pacifica of Tovaglia's age as fifty-seven when she gave this testimony in 1624. This would have made her eleven years younger than Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, who was born in 1566. The investigation accepted Sister Maria's response to be valid testimony, even though she was obviously not able to witness Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's upbringing.

Some of those who had actively promoted Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's beatification testified on her behalf during the investigation. One of her confessors, Vincenzo Puccini, testified at length. Puccini had written numerous letters to Paul V asking that she be canonized. In Puccini's testimony, he reiterated his unfulfilled

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<sup>199</sup> “Secundus testis Admondum Reverenda Mater Soror Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia.” *Summariium, actionum, virtutum et miraculorum*, 42.

requests to the previous popes. He stated though that Urban VIII and several cardinals supported her beatification.

“Now this petition on her sanctity to Urban VIII has procured to me and to Signore and Signore Giovane Battista Scannarola and to the beatification and canonization of this mother [Mary Magdalene de’ Pazzi]. And this results from other Christians and prelates especially the many Cardinals who wrote letters producing every good deed to help achieve her beatification.”<sup>200</sup>

Puccini was confident that Urban VIII would beatify the mystic.

Urban VIII used his family connections at the convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli to forward Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi’s beatification. His family members also supported both the beatification and canonization of Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi. One of the sisters at the convent of Santa Marai degli Angeli, Sister Innocence Barberini, testified that Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi’s virtuous life impacted the nuns and her confessors. Innocence did not know Maria Maddalena and she testified only because her family supported the beatification. Innocence’s father was a Cardinal and the pope’s brother.<sup>201</sup> She was only twenty-six years old when she testified. This revealed that Innocence was only eight years old when Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi died and eleven years old when Vincenzo Puccini reissued his biography of the mystic.<sup>202</sup> In her testimony, she asserted that both the convent and the Medici family

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<sup>200</sup>“Sextus et sexagesimis testis III. Mus et Admodum Reverendus Dominus Vincentius De Puccinis” *Summarium, actionum, virtutum et miraculorum*, 194.

<sup>201</sup> Ludwig Pastor. *This History of the Popes From the Close of the Middle Ages Volume 30* (Wilmington: Consortium Books, 1978), 92; The interview noted the standing of her father in relation to the Catholic Church in the investigation. “Filia Excellentissimi Domini Principis Don Caroli Barberini.” *Summarium, actionum, virtutum et miraculorum*, 194.

<sup>202</sup>Puccini also heard the confessions of Sister Innocence Baberini. See “Septimus testis Admondum Reverenda Mater Soror Innocentia” *Summarium, actionum, virtutum et miraculorum*, 194.

sought Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's beatification. She asserted that these requests had wide support:

“I know that the Serene Grand Dukes of Tuscany Cosimo I and Ferdinand II have supplicated their request to the highest popes Paul V and Gregory XV. And our Signore [Vicenzo Puccini] has lived for the beatification and canonization of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi. And the serene archduchess and madam who offered to our nuns to produce every timely instance of her life to obtain this beatification and canonization.”<sup>203</sup>

Sister Innocence also testified about the following Maria Maddalena acquired after her death at the convent Santa Maria degli Angeli. She specifically mentioned how truly devoted Vicenzo Puccini was to preserving her memory. Innocence asserted that her confessor had been particularly devoted to seeing Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi be beatified.

Several other Barberini family members were also instrumental to the investigation into Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. Constanza Magdalotti Barberini testified in support of Maria Maddalena to the Sacred Congregation of Rights on November 24, 1624 in the Barberini Chapel located in Rome.<sup>204</sup> Constanza was the mother of Cardinal Francesco Barberini and Sister Innocence Barberini. Sister Maria Grazia Barberini, another niece to Urban VIII was present during Constanza's testimony.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> “Septimus testis Admondum Reverenda Mater Soror Innocentia.” *Summarium, actionum, virtutum et miraculorum*, 194.

<sup>204</sup>“These request came from your nuns at this monastery especially our father confessor Signore Vincenzo Puccini.” See “Archivo Vaticano, Arch. SS. Rituum Congreg. Processus” 769. C. 285v.” *Summarium, actionum, virtutum et miraculorum*, 25.

<sup>205</sup>“Archivo Vaticano, Arch. SS. Rituum Congreg. Processus 769. C. 285v.” *Summarium, actionum, virtutum et miraculorum*, 25.

Even the Promoter of Faith began to support Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's beatification. The Promoter of Faith's role was to oppose the beatification and investigate the claims of those who were not in favor of the candidate's beatification in 1626.<sup>206</sup> During the beatification the designated Promoter of Faith, Antonio Cerri, provided the committee with all of the claims for and against her beatification. During his investigation, Cerri decided that she was an authentic mystic and that her corpse had been blessed with miraculous healing powers.<sup>207</sup> He agreed with the committee that she was truly virtuous and able to perform miracles after her death. Cerri not only believed that Maria Maddalena should be beatified but he also thought that she should be canonized immediately afterwards. Cerri also made his support known to Urban VIII: "He declared to his Holiness, that if it pleased him, he might canonize, and in the meantime beatify her."<sup>208</sup>

The formal process of beatification required the ecclesiastical committee to present the results of their investigation as well as that of the Promoter of Faith's examination to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. After the physicians' examination of the corpse, all evidence was presented to Urban VIII in March of 1626.<sup>209</sup> Urban then instructed the Sacred Congregation of Rites to review the evidence again for the formal beatification ceremony on May 8, 1626. The congregation presented the evidence again to Urban VIII and the congregation authenticated her many miracles

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<sup>206</sup>Blaher, 29.

<sup>207</sup>Cepari, 384.

<sup>208</sup>Cepari, 384.

<sup>209</sup> Physicians examine the corpse to make sure that the corpse was not tampered with and actually performed the miracles, Cepari, 384.

and found her life of devotion to be worthy of emulation. As her biographer wrote, “His Holiness (Urban VIII) by a brief given on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, 1626, declared our saint blessed, and permitted her office to be said in Rome in the church of St. John of the Florentines for the first year, and in all the churches of Florence in perpetuity.”<sup>210</sup>

Although Urban VIII supported Maria Maddalena de Pazzi’s beatification, he did not want to canonize her immediately. Instead, Urban VIII ordered a second investigation into her authenticity.<sup>211</sup> Candidates could be granted the title of saint immediately; however, the number of requests to have devoted canonized increased and the Catholic Church decided they needed to be more selective about who was given this title. Urban, one of the stricter Catholic Reformation popes, felt a second investigation was necessary to canonized the mystic. Unlike some of the previous popes, Urban enforced the Council of Trent’s decrees and restricted the canonization process further.<sup>212</sup>

Even though Urban VIII hesitated to canonize Maria Maddalena de Pazzi, he promoted her veneration within Florence. As a result, the status of Maria Maddalena’s convent rose after the official decree of her beatification. Urban VIII placed two of his nieces in the convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli and in 1628 he

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<sup>210</sup> Cepari, 385.

<sup>211</sup>“Though Urban VIII of happy memory, who honored the saint by the title of Blessed, and exposed her to public and universal veneration by a decree given May, 1626, had declared, with the concurrence of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, that she might be also canonized when it pleased his Holiness; he himself by a new decree ordered that further discussion should be made before proceeding in so weighty a matter and that there should be a new process formed for the more mature consideration of her merits.” Cepari, 427.

<sup>212</sup> Robert Birely argued that popes such as Paul V were more lenient towards Catholic Reformation reforms and Urban VIII was much stricter on these reforms, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700; a reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (Washington DC: The Catholic University Press, 1999), 38.

built a new convent for the nuns in Borgo Pinti. He named the convent after Maria Maddalena de Pazzi and distinguished the entrance with the Barberini coat of arms.<sup>213</sup> The convent built a lavishly decorated tomb, adorned with a gold medal presented by Urban VIII.<sup>214</sup> In 1637, the pope commissioned a series of eight paintings by Andrea Camassei of Maria Maddalena's visions for the convent.<sup>215</sup> In these paintings, such as *Sister Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi in the presence of Saint Augustine and Saint Catherine of Siena* mystic is seen speaking directly to these two religious.<sup>216</sup> Instead of Maria Maddalena's depiction to be of lower status within the painting, she is seen to be on the same level as these noted saints.<sup>217</sup>

Urban VIII's successors were far less interested than he in the canonization of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. Innocent X, a member of the Pamfili family of Umbria, succeeded Urban in 1644 and was furious with the Barberini for their misuse of ecclesiastical funds.<sup>218</sup> The new pope removed Urban VIII's nephew, Antonio

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<sup>213</sup> Erich Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries 1527-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 185.

<sup>214</sup> Urban VIII ordered that the medal was to be placed at her feet and was not to be removed Cepari, 426.

<sup>215</sup> Sara F. Mathews Grieco. "Models of Female Sanctity in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy." *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present*, edit. Scaraffia, Lucetta and Gabriella Zarri (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 174.

<sup>216</sup> Andrea Camassei, *Mystico sposalizio di S. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi all presenza di San Agostino e di Santa Caterina da Siena*, Uffizi, Florence.

<sup>217</sup> Piero Pacini documented the Camassei series in an article on the imagery of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi from her death until her canonization. I "Deposit" di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi de La Diffusione delle due Immagini (1607-1668) *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* XXXII/1-2 (1988), 223.

<sup>218</sup> Urban VIII, who reigned over the papacy for over twenty years, promoted the arts and spent ecclesiastical funds commissioning artworks for his palace. His family members also exercised a great deal of power within the papacy during his reign.



*Andrea Camassei, Mistico sposalizio di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi all  
presenza di San Agostino e di Santa Caterina da Siena, 1637 Uffizi, Florence.*

Barberini, from office, in 1644.<sup>219</sup> Innocent displayed little interest in beatifying or canonizing any candidates. Despite the pope's disinterest in promoting the veneration of saints, his cardinal, Federico Baldisserea Bartolomeo Cornaro, promoted the veneration of Saint Teresa of Avila in the Cornaro Chapel in Rome.<sup>220</sup> Cornaro commissioned Gian Lorenzo Bernini to create an altar dedicated to Saint Teresa. Innocent X reigned for only ten years and he was succeeded by his close friend Cardinal Fabio Chigi of Siena.<sup>221</sup> Chigi became Alexander VII and directed his interest towards science and humanism.<sup>222</sup> He too failed to canonize Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi.

Florentines did not share Rome's newfound disinterest in the veneration of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. After the Catholic Church granted Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi the title of blessed, many within the Florentine community contributed money to decorate her tomb in the Nasi Chapel, located in the newly constructed Convent of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. The Nasi, a local Florentine family, built the chapel immediately after her beatification. The family commissioned a painting of the saint in 1629 to be placed over the tomb. The chapel also included a lavishly decorated altar.

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<sup>219</sup>Pastor explained that after Innocent's election in 1644 he removed Anotonio Baberini Cardinal Protector of France from his position. The papacy was displeased with the pope's decision and this created tension within the papal state, because several officials were still loyal to the Barberini. *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages* 30, 48.

<sup>220</sup>Pastor. *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages* 30, 383.

<sup>221</sup>Pastor noted that Innocent X highly respected Chigi and they remained close through his reign. Chigi was also present when Innocent X died. *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages* 30, 378.

<sup>222</sup>Eric Cochrane noted that unlike Urban VIII, Alexander VII directed his interest towards Galileo and Magalotti's scientific research. *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries 1527-1800* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), 246.

“Under the marble altar the sacred deposit reposes a shrine of the clearest crystal, worked in four diamond shaped panels, and framed in gilt paneling of most noble design. The shrine rests on a base nearly a yard high, gilt with flowers in intaglio, interwoven with scrolls and arabesques, which look at once rich and beautiful.”<sup>223</sup>

The Nasi family continued to donate money to the shrine of Blessed Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi until 1667. Other benefactors donated money to clothe the beatified’s body. The donation bought a new habit that was “of black cloth of gold, and an upper tunic of white cloth of silver.”<sup>224</sup> The convent received numerous donations in support of Maria Maddalena’s cult.

The archbishop of Florence came to play a powerful role in the investigation on the canonization of Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi. Numerous miracles occurred after Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi’s beatification and reports of them were sent to the Archbishop of Florence. After these reports, the archbishop ordered an investigation on the authenticity of these miracles.<sup>225</sup> The archbishop pronounced these miracles authentic. The Catholic Church granted local bishops the power to approve new miracles and relics.<sup>226</sup>

Part of the impetus to canonize Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi came from additional reports of miracles that occurred after her beatification. Some witnesses claimed that her shrines within the Convent of Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi performed miracles. One of the miracles inspected by the Divine Office as evidence concerned the supply of oil at her convent. In April of 1627, during the celebration of the

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<sup>223</sup> Ceparì, 425.

<sup>224</sup> Ceparì, 425.

<sup>225</sup> Ceparì, 386.

<sup>226</sup> Birely, 142.

Common of the Virgins, the sisters at Santa Maria degli Angeli, uncovered and displayed Pazzi's body on their altar for eight days. As in the case of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's remains, blessed and saints' corpses and the oils produced by the corpse were known for their healing abilities.<sup>227</sup> The nuns created a shrine dedicated to Maria Maddalena consisting of an image of Maria Maddalena surrounded by lights. At the end of the feast in May, the two nuns who were responsible for the lights went to replace the oil. When one of the sisters opened an oil container she believed to have been partially used, she discovered instead that the container was completely full. The sisters continued to remove oil from this container for the next eight days; the level of the oil never diminished. The sisters attributed this miracle to the direct intervention of Maria Maddalena de Pazzi. Nine theologians approved by the Archbishop of Florence examined the oil container to check the authenticity of the miracle. According to their examination:

“they found sixteen flasks and calculated fifty flasks had been drawn, which with the sixteen remaining, made sixty-six, the jar not holding more than forty-five, so that the miracle was clearly proved, . . . it having pleased heaven to prove the merits of the saint, and the declaration of her glory made by the sovereign Pontiff.”<sup>228</sup>

A second miracle concerning Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi and the convent's oil supply occurred in August of 1654. Sister Carita noticed that the convent's oil supply was low. Perhaps recalling the earlier miracles, she replaced an image of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi behind the oil container and repeated the *Pater an Ave*. She asked Sister Maria Maddalena to make the oil supply last through the “gathering

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<sup>227</sup>Cepari, 385.

<sup>228</sup> Cepari, 386.

of time.”<sup>229</sup> The oil supply remained steady through the Nativity of our Lady.<sup>230</sup> The oil finally decreased after this feast.

The third miracle attributed to Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi occurred in 1660 when the wine at the Convent Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi’s soured. The superior of the convent took some of the previous miraculous oil into the wine cellar and placed the oil in the barrels. She placed a picture of Sister Maria Maddalena in the cellar and made the sign of the cross over the spoiled containers of wine. The superior asked Maria Maddalena if she would make the wine sweet again.<sup>231</sup> The sisters waited for three days and then they tasted the wine. Miraculously, the wine was restored.<sup>232</sup>

After Maria Maddalena de Pazzi’s beatification, stories about the healing powers of Maria Maddalena’s relics spread throughout Italy and many religious houses requested to have them sent to their churches as far away as France, Spain, Flanders, and Ireland. Several Italian cities, such as Rome, Venice, Milan, and Mantua also requested relics.<sup>233</sup> The requests for her relics were so numerous that her own convent eventually was left without any of their namesake’s belongings.

The cult of Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi acquired a strong following from other areas outside Tuscany that contributed to her canonization. During the growth of her

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<sup>229</sup> Ceparì, 387.

<sup>230</sup> Catholics celebrate the birth of the Virgin Mary on September 8, *The American Book of Days* edit. Jane M. Hatch (New York: Wilson, 1978), 822.

<sup>231</sup> Ceparì, 388.

<sup>232</sup> Ceparì, 389.

<sup>233</sup> Ceparì, 424.

public veneration, devoted Catholics throughout Europe began to worship her shrines. Altars were constructed within churches commemorating her life in Genova, Venice, Cannes, Rome, Naples, Gubbio, Forli, Anversa, Torino, Bologna, Livorno, Sorrento, Isidoro, Lisbon, and Madrid between 1630 and 1666.<sup>234</sup> The growth of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's cult outside the region of Tuscany sources as evidence that Catholics throughout Europe believed in the sanctity of her life. This sure in popularity contributed to her canonization because one of the requirements for canonization was that a cult needed to exist and flourish.<sup>235</sup>

Although Urban VIII died in 1644, his political influence eventually helped bring about the canonization of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. In 1667, the College of Cardinals elected Clement IX, the former Giulio Rospigliosi, to the papal throne. Rospigliosi had been allied to Urban VIII and had served as the nuncio in Spain during Urban's reign. Urban VIII and Rospigliosi had shared a great interest in literature and art. Urban admired Rospigliosi's writings and he allowed the cardinal to perform plays at his theatre.<sup>236</sup> Rospigliosi's loyalty to the Barberini family had not served him well during the reign of Innocent X. He fell out of favor with Innocent X and was forced to leave the Papal court in 1652.<sup>237</sup> He returned to Rome only during

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<sup>234</sup> Piero Pacini, " 'depositi' di Santa Maria Maddalene de' Pazzi." *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* XXXII/1-2 (1988), 227.

<sup>235</sup> Blaher, 112.

<sup>236</sup> Ludwig Pastor noted that Urban VIII allowed Rospigliosi to write plays for the theatre next to Urban VIII's palace. Urban was well known for his love of literature and humanism. Rospigliosi shared this passion with Urban. His play was performed at the theatre in 1634. *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages* 29 (Wilmington, Consortium Books, 1978), 506.

<sup>237</sup> Pastor, 30, 20 & 91.

the reign of Alexander VIII.<sup>238</sup> When he was elected pope in 1667 he took the name Clement IX, he continued the work of his former patron and ordered the investigation into Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's sanctity to begin.

The reports of new miracles, the support from other regions of Italy and other European countries, and the election of a pope whose ideas favored those of Urban VIII, led to the almost immediate canonization of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. Urban VIII wanted to see a further investigation on the sanctity of her miracles and a stronger devotion from her cult.<sup>239</sup> The investigations of the miracles conducted by the Archbishop of Florence and the numerous donations to her convent eventually fulfilled his request. Clement IX appointed Cardinal Decio Azzolino to promote this examination in Florence and in Naples. The Sacred Congregation of Rites attested to the authenticity of the new miracles, writing: "In full congregation, having heard the opinions of the lords, cardinals, prelates, and counselors, interposed the decree for her solemn canonization, declaring that he would solemnize it on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1669."<sup>240</sup> Clement IX canonized Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi on April 28 1669 at St. Peter's Church in Rome.

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<sup>238</sup> Pastor, 30, 300.

<sup>239</sup> Cepari, 427.

<sup>240</sup> Cepari, 428.

## CONCLUSION

Early modern popes were political creatures who directed their interest toward their native regions. The cult of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi reveals that political status played a powerful role in the beatification and canonization process of the seventeenth-century Catholic Church. While Florentines began their campaign to beatify the mystic in 1610, it was not until Urban VIII's ascent to the papal throne that an investigation on her authenticity, which led to her public veneration in Florence and Tuscany, was begun. Several members of Urban VIII's family testified on behalf of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi during this process. Although Urban VII failed to canonize the mystic, his lingering influence contributed to Clement IX's decision to do so, for Clement remained loyal to Urban VIII's memory.

Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's canonization was brought about by a devoted following from Florence, Tuscany, and Mantua. Ferdinando de' Gonzaga witnessed the performance of miracles at her grave and persuaded Alessandro de' Marzo de' Medici to start the petition to the Sacred Congregation of Rites that launched an investigation into her sanctity. Political support from the Medici and the Gonzaga eventually assured her veneration. Without the efforts of Vincenzo Puccini, Ferdinando Gonzaga of Mantua, and that of several Medici (Alessandro, Alessandro de' Marzo, and Cosimo), the Catholic Church was unlikely to have beatified the mystic.

Although politics played a key role in Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's beatification and canonization, her exemplary life still played a key role in her veneration. Her sisters' descriptions of her visions emphasized her similarities to

Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila. The nuns' documentation, the testimonies from her sisters and the performances of miracles became the key evidence that demonstrated Maria Maddalena's sanctity to Rome.

While Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi was eventually canonized by the Catholic Church, several other likely candidates were not. Like Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, the Roman mystic Ludovica Albertoni's (1474-1533) cult was founded immediately after her death. Her confessor wrote her biography and Romans reported that miracles had occurred at her grave in 1554.<sup>241</sup> Ludovica was not beatified until 170 years after her death, when Clement X, related by marriage to the Albertoni family, granted her the title of Blessed.<sup>242</sup> After her beatification, her relative Cardinal Paluzzi degli Albertoni commissioned Bernini to sculpt her image. He believed it would inspire the faithful and the Church would canonize her as a result.<sup>243</sup> It never did. Unlike Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, Ludovica's adherents could not garner sufficient political support from the papacy nor from her family's connections in Rome to support her canonization.

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<sup>241</sup> Karen Perlove Shelley, *Bernini and the Idealization of Death: The Blessed Ludovica Albertoni and the Altieri Chapel* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 5.

<sup>242</sup> Howard Hibbard included this information on the mystic in his section on the sculpture created in her memory, *Bernini* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1965), 220.

<sup>243</sup> Ludovica, a devoted Franciscan, committed her life to charity in the early sixteenth century. See Vernon Hyde Minor, *Baroque and Rococo Art and Culture* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1999), 131 & Hibbard, 220.

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