

Chapter 9

Invisibilia per visibilia: Roman Nuns, Art Patronage, and the Construction of Identity

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In its reform of the Catholic Church, the Council of Trent (1545–63) re-established the strict enclosure of female convents, which both prohibited nuns from leaving the cloister and visitors from entering it, in order to protect the chastity of religious women and enable them to fulfill their role as prayerful intercessors in Christian society.¹ Convent architecture was designed to physically enforce *clausura* (enclosure) and to shape an environment conducive to the attainment of spiritual perfection. Attached to the convent complex was a church accessible to the laity but not to the nuns, who worshiped and recited the Divine Office in a separate nuns' choir or *chiesa interiore* frequently located behind the tribune wall in which a grated window above the high altar provided the nuns with audio and visual access to the mass, but prevented them from being seen by the public or even the priest. Nuns received Communion and confessed at other, smaller grated windows. Choirs were also sometimes located on the upper level of the convent above the entrance of the church or in a transept, but always covered by obscuring grilles that rendered the nuns invisible to the public (Fig. 9.1).² These enclosures maintained the separation of nuns from secular society and fostered a sense of their holy mystique.³

Although nuns could obtain views of the celebration of the Eucharist and portions of the church interior filtered through the grilles of their choirs or from behind *gelosie* above the cornice, they did not physically enter the space of their public churches.⁴ Yet in spite of this lack of physical access, nuns frequently lavished considerable attention on this public space, embellishing it with architecture, paintings, sculpture, and liturgical furnishings. This chapter examines how nuns in post-Tridentine Rome engaged in the art patronage of their public churches and how through their patronage they constructed multi-faceted identities which both subscribed to ideals of female monasticism and asserted an agency that subtly challenged the constrictions of enclosure. In the public church's liminal space between the cloister and the secular world,



9.1 View toward choir gallery, c. 1638–39, Santa Lucia in Selci, Rome

art and architecture served to present the public face of the convent and to represent metaphorically the invisible nuns' living presence and social role in a way that simultaneously highlighted their spiritual separateness and maintained their connection to the social fabric of the city.

Convent Patronage Mechanisms

Acting as a corporate body, small groups, or individuals, nuns were often the principal patrons of the decoration of their public churches in seventeenth-century Rome. Convents could undertake projects by drawing on their communal patrimony consisting of interest-bearing papal bonds (*luoghi di monti*), investments in long-term loans (*censi*), real estate, donations, inheritances, and especially the dowries which all nuns paid for their maintenance in the community.⁵ This corporate patronage was augmented to a significant extent by nuns who, either individually or banding together in small groups, assumed sponsorship of embellishments in their convent's public church. The aristocratic and upper-class nuns who populated Roman convents typically received *livelli* (allowances) from their families⁶ that enabled them to participate in the tradition of female ecclesiastic patronage engaged in by secular women of the same privileged social classes and that empowered the nuns with at least some measure of autonomy in shaping the character of their churches.⁷

Constructing Identity

In the intensely image-conscious society of seventeenth-century Rome, art and architecture served as crucial vehicles in the fabrication of identity for their patrons. Papal patronage intertwined individual family identity with the promotion of the historical institutions of the papacy and the Church.⁸ Cardinals, papal relatives, and other noble families employed decorative projects as a means of establishing and maintaining social status and prestige.⁹ Likewise, religious orders and congregations engaged in self-promotion, utilizing the architecture and decorations of their churches to construct the identity of their community and celebrate its particular mission within the Catholic Church. The spirit of Catholic reform had given rise to new male orders and congregations like the Jesuits, Oratorians, Piarists, Ministers of the Infirm, and Congregation of the Christian Doctrine among others which, along with older mendicant orders, engaged in an active apostolate of preaching, teaching, missionary work, care of the poor and sick, and instruction of the populace in Christian Doctrine. These male religious performed a role of *miles Christi* promoting the Catholic faith through their work in the world.¹⁰

Celebration of this role is evident, for example, in the ceilings of two Jesuit churches in Rome which exalt the identity of the Society of Jesus and its missionary activities in propagating the Catholic faith. In Giovanni Battista Gaulli's *Triumph of the Name of Jesus* (1676–79) in the Gesù, the IHS monogram of Jesus and insignia of the Jesuits glows in a sunburst of light as a beacon to the saved ascending toward heaven while below heretics are cast down, tumbling dramatically out of the fresco. Stucco figures flanking the surrounding windows represent the geographical areas of the Jesuits' mission. An even more emphatic celebration of Jesuit missionary activity, Fra Andrea Pozzo's *Allegory of the Missionary Work of the Society of Jesus* (1691–94) in S. Ignazio represents divine light, emanating from God the Father and Christ with his Cross, striking Jesuit-founder St. Ignatius Loyola and spreading out to other Jesuit saints and to allegorical figures of the four continents.¹¹ The imagery triumphantly projects the Jesuits' divinely ordained role in bringing about Christ's mission on earth.

The mission of male and female religious in the post-Tridentine era was distinctly different, however. As brides of Christ, nuns fulfilled their role enclosed behind the cloister walls, segregated from the secular world. Convents were places dedicated to prayer, where nuns functioned as intercessors for humanity's salvation and the spiritual needs of Christians. It was nuns' virginal purity and spiritual devotion, protected by *clausura*, that rendered their prayers particularly efficacious. While in general ways both male and female religious embraced similar decorative themes relating to their church's titular saint, religious order, and tenets of the post-Tridentine Church, within this context the decorations of many convent churches established the female identity of their community and called attention to women's role in the Church. This is not to claim that church decorations sponsored by religious communities were wholly gender-specific or that some similar iconographic themes did not appear in churches of both male and female communities. Religious orders honored and celebrated both their male and female saints, and devotion extended to saints beyond one's order. But through an emphasis on images of the Virgin Mary, female saints, and virtues, the imagery of female convent churches associated the invisible nuns with these holy models of behavior and testified to the power of the virgin nuns to perform their crucial intercessory role.

Prayer and Intercession

Traditionally, monastics were charged with the duty of the communal recitation of the Divine Office, a set of prayers consisting of psalms, hymns, and readings, at eight canonical hours throughout the day and night. It was through these communal prayers of praise and petition that the divine grace believed so necessary for the needs of the Universal Church was received. By the

seventeenth century, the emphasis on an active apostolate had made private recitation of the Office common for male religious,¹² but the communal recitation of the prayers of liturgical hours remained the principal task of cloistered nuns, a role emphasized in a plethora of advice manuals for nuns published in the post-Tridentine period. In *La monaca perfetta*, Carlo Andrea Basso reminded nuns that the Divine Office was a public prayer which, when made in the name of the whole Church by persons particularly deputized, penetrates heaven and that in its recitation nuns imitated a choir of angels. As virgins and brides of Christ, nuns were especially empowered as intercessors. Their relation to their divine spouse imparted them with a status and influence even greater than that gained by a woman married to a secular ruler.¹³ In addition to traditional oral prayers, each nun was to engage in silent mental prayer in which she established a genuine dialogue with God. For instance the Constitutions of the Dominican nuns at S. Maria Maddalena in Monte Cavallo prescribed at least an hour of mental prayer twice daily.¹⁴ Devotional guides such as Luis de la Puente's *Compendio delle Meditationi* (Rome, 1620) offered instruction and helped spread this practice in female convents.

Regarded as crucial, honorable, and special, their mission as prayerful virgin intercessors bestowed status on cloistered nuns, and decorations within their churches celebrated this role. Oval medallions on the lateral walls at the entrance to the tribune in the Dominican church of S. Caterina a Magnanapoli frescoed by Giuseppe Passeri, an artist favored by the nuns in their redecoration of the church's chapels at the beginning of the eighteenth century, offered visual testament to the vocation of the nuns hidden from the public in their choir behind the tribune wall. *St. Catherine of Siena in Prayer* (Fig. 9.2) represents a pivotal moment in the life of St. Catherine, titular of the church, as related in Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior*. The appearance of a snow-white dove above her head, seen by her father while she was praying, had confirmed Catherine's vow of virginity and overcame her family's opposition to her spiritual vocation.¹⁵



9.2 Giuseppe Passeri, *St. Catherine of Siena in Prayer*, c. early 1700s, Santa Caterina a Magnanapoli, Rome

On the opposite wall, the scene of *Christ Offering St. Catherine the Choice of a Crown of Gold or of Thorns* depicts another episode in the saint's life when Christ appeared to her while she prayed. Holding out to her a golden crown studded with pearls and precious stones and a crown of thorns, he offered her the choice of which one to wear in her lifetime and which to wear after death. Catherine "seized the crown of thorns with both hands" and pressed it onto her head, resolving to follow Christ's own passion and take suffering to herself.¹⁶ Catherine saw herself as an intercessor suffering vicariously for the sins of others. Through her tearful prayers and sinless suffering, she could win salvation for souls and alter the world.¹⁷ The public was reminded through these images of the nuns' own vows of chastity, their lives of sacrifice in imitation of Christ, and the power of their prayers.

Nuns' identity as virginal intercessors was also asserted in the nave vault frescoes of the Augustinian church of S. Marta al Collegio Romano (1671), painted by Giovanni Battista Gaulli and his assistants on the commission of one of the convent's nuns, Maria Scholastica Colleoni. Three *tondi* celebrate the church's titular, St. Martha, depicting her *Apotheosis* (center) flanked by scenes of *St. Martha Subduing the Ferocious Dragon of Tarascon* and *St. Martha Resuscitating a Drowned Youth* (Fig. 9.3). According to her legend, she had accompanied her sister Mary Magdalene to the south of France where they both preached and won converts. Plagued by a terrible dragon, the people of Tarascon begged Martha to prove the power of Christ by ridding them of the beast. This she fearlessly proceeded to do by subduing it with the sign of the cross and binding it with her girdle. In another incident, a youth who had drowned while swimming across the Rhône River to hear Martha preach was restored to life and converted by her tearful prayers. Beyond their simple appropriateness as stories of the church's titular saint, these scenes had particular relevance in the church of this female convent. St. Martha was a virgin who had dedicated herself to the service of the Lord and, according to legend, had founded the first convent for women in Gaul to which she withdrew, devoting herself to prayer and fasting.¹⁸ Like Martha's conquest of the dragon (a symbol of Satan) and her restoration of the youth through her prayers, the power of the virginal nuns' prayers won spiritual protection and salvation. Although the active, public apostolate of the early Christian St. Martha was denied to cloistered nuns, their prayers were regarded as a form of action by the post-Tridentine Church. St. Teresa of Avila (1515–82), considered a model for post-Tridentine nuns, had asserted that nuns' prayers to sustain priests in their struggles in the world served as a powerful weapon against heresy. This military imagery appears in other treatises for nuns that compare convents to fortifications that protect Christians from the devil and nuns' prayers to guards defending a piazza. Through their prayers nuns could be soldiers for Christ, albeit in the cloister.¹⁹ These hidden prayers of the S. Marta nuns were visibly proclaimed in the images of their titular saint on the church's vault.



9.3 Girolamo Troppa (after the design of Giovanni Battista Gaulli),
St. Martha Resuscitating a Drowned Youth, c. 1671–72, Santa Marta al
Collegio Romano, Rome

When the tribune of S. Marta was embellished with paintings, marbles, and stuccoes, under the patronage of Abbess Maria Eleonora Boncompagni in 1672–73, a painting of *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha* by Guglielmo Cortese was placed on the high altar above the grate that communicated to the nuns' choir behind the tribune wall. In the painting Christ gently admonishes Martha for her criticism of her sister Mary, who had been intently listening to Christ's teaching instead of assisting with dinner preparations. While traditionally this theme (Luke

10: 39–42) represented the active and contemplative life and suggested the superior virtue of the latter, post-Tridentine theology favored a mixed life that combined charitable good works and contemplation. Though the possibility for this might seem more available to male religious or lay persons, it was also relevant to the Augustinian nuns of S. Marta who engaged in contemplative meditation and an active role of educating young female boarders as was common in many convents.²⁰ St. Teresa of Avila drew a more direct connection between mental prayer and service to God, asserting that in active work, the soul is working interiorly and that “Martha and Mary never fail to work almost together when the soul is in this state.”²¹ Treatises addressed to nuns in this era also referred to the theme of Mary and Martha in recognizing the varied legitimate roles that nuns, possessed more of one nature or the other, could play within their convent community.²² Thus the high altar painting at S. Marta al Collegio Romano both reflected contemporary spiritual ideals and acknowledged the diverse contributions of the convent’s cloistered nuns.

Female Exemplars: Institutional and Spiritual Identity

When the Augustinian nuns at S. Lucia in Selci decorated their public church in the mid-seventeenth century, they established their corporate identity with subjects related to their titular saint and religious order within a context of female exemplars and spirituality.²³ The convent’s titular, the Early Christian virgin martyr St. Lucy, was depicted on the nave vault, commissioned by Antonio Cerri, whose daughters were nuns in the convent, and in a scene of her martyrdom painted by Giovanni Lanfranco in a lateral chapel under the patronage of two nuns from the Vanini family. St. Lucy’s renunciation of marriage and distribution of her wealth to the poor paralleled the nuns’ vows of chastity and poverty. Virgin martyrs like St. Lucy were held up as models of Christian perfection for women. Although both male and female religious made a vow of chastity, the virginal state became most emphatically required for female monastics to attain Christian perfection. Through virginity women transcended their bodily nature and perceived female weakness and achieved spiritual power. But virginity was a fragile treasure to be zealously guarded, and virgin martyr saints who had heroically defended their chastity and faith served as the ultimate exemplars.²⁴ This theme of empowered virginity appears again in Anastasio Fontebuoni’s high altar painting of the *Annunciation* (1606) commissioned by the convent. According to St. Augustine in *De Virginitate*, Mary’s role in the Incarnation demonstrated Christ’s approval of her dedication to virginity, and by extension all holy virgins were associated with Mary as mothers of Christ.²⁵ Nuns were urged to imitate Mary, the true mother of good nuns, whose virtues of virginity, humility, and obedience made her the ideal model of female piety.²⁶ The high



9.4 Andrea Camassei, *St. John the Evangelist Giving Communion to the Virgin*, c. 1636–39, Santa Lucia in Selci, Rome

altarpiece thus celebrated the convent's virgin nuns and reminded the public of their special relationship with Mary and Christ.

It was in the Eucharist that nuns achieved their most complete union with Christ, and they ardently desired to partake of the body of Christ in this sacrament.²⁷ In the Chapel of the Sacrament, decorated under the patronage of Sister Isabella Melchiorri, the Virgin receives Communion from St. John the Evangelist in Andrea Camassei's altarpiece (Fig. 9.4). The Counter-Reformation

Church reaffirmed the doctrine of transubstantiation and promoted Eucharistic devotion as a means of Catholic reform. To partake frequently of the Eucharist was to participate more fully in this reform.²⁸ The Council of Trent decreed that nuns should confess and receive Communion at least once a month, but greater frequency was more common, and the nuns at S. Lucia took Communion at least twice a week.²⁹ The Eucharist was a potent weapon against sin and a preserver of the chastity that made nuns efficacious intercessors between the human and divine, and prayers made during mass or Holy Communion were considered to have a particular divine energy that filled the soul with a sanctified spirit.³⁰ Painted depictions of the last Communion of saints, like Camassei's teacher Domenichino's *Last Communion of St. Jerome* (1614), helped foster devotion to the Sacrament in the seventeenth century. Significantly, in the context of the female convent at S. Lucia in Selci, it is the Virgin who receives Communion from St. John who, dressed in priestly vestments, holds up the host centered between the gazes of the two figures. A white cloth held in Mary's outstretched arms recalls Christ's swaddling cloth and funeral shroud, and as Mary is about to receive her Son's body in the form of the consecrated host, she seems about to take his physical body again into her arms reminding the viewer of her privileged relationship to Christ. The nuns' own sacramental act of course would never have been visible to the public since they received Communion inside the cloister via a small window located to the side of the high altar, but the Virgin represents the convent's nuns who partook of the Communion hosts conserved within the sumptuous ciborium on the altar below. Images like this one or Benedetto Luti's *Communion of Mary Magdalene* in the Dominican church of S. Caterina a Magnanapoli, in which a tearful penitent Magdalene, supported by angels, receives her last Communion from St. Maximin, served to highlight the nuns' special relationship to the divine.³¹ But in both paintings the reception of the host is mediated and controlled by male priests. The subordinate positions of Mary and the Magdalene in relation respectively to John and Maximin (who administer the sacrament) reinforce the hierarchical authority of the priest in making the miracle of the transubstantiation. In fact, the post-Tridentine Church's emphasis on frequent Communion was one means of reasserting priestly authority.³² Although such images celebrate a female spirituality, the distinction between male and female roles in the official Church is clearly maintained.

Even in the chapel dedicated to St. Augustine, author of the monastic rule followed by the order named for him, female spirituality and intercessory mission is incorporated into the iconography. Under the patronage of two nuns from the Cerri family, the chapel was adorned with Camassei's painting of a *Vision of St. Augustine* in which the saint kneels in adoration of the Virgin and Christ as co-nurturers of the church. The theme of the double intercession through the blood of Christ and the milk of the Virgin expressed in this vision was one closely associated with female piety. Medieval female mystics associated female lactation

with Christ's nurture through the blood of his wounds, and the concept of the double intercession remained a devotional focus in the seventeenth century.³³

In the Chapel of the Trinity (1637–39), decorated on the commission of Sister Clarice Vittoria Landi, stuccoed scenes on the framing arch refer to the Virgin's relation to the Trinity in her role as the vehicle of the Incarnation, expressed in scenes of Abraham and the Angels, an Old Testament prototype for the Annunciation and the Trinity, and of Jacob's Ladder, which represented the union of heaven and earth accomplished through Mary. Jacob's Ladder was also closely associated with prayer as a means by which angels continually ascend and descend to carry Christians' petitions to God. Regarded as the companions of angels, virgin nuns also served as conduits of prayer uniting heaven and earth.³⁴ In Giuseppe Cesari d'Arpino's altarpiece, St. Monica shares a vision of the Trinity with the Augustinian saint Nicholas of Tolentino. This latter figure originally may have represented St. Augustine, Monica's son and author of a treatise on the Trinity.³⁵ The presence of the *fons vitae* (fountain of life) in a cartouche on the chapel arch and a view of water and the rising sun in the background of the painting allude to a mystical experience shared by Monica and Augustine at Ostia toward the end of her life.³⁶ Augustine's early spiritual mentor Monica had helped win her son's conversion through her abundant tearful prayers. Nuns were reminded by writers like Cardinal Agostino Valerio that God washed away the sins of the world with their own tears shed in prayer.³⁷ In both the Chapels of St. Augustine and the Trinity, female figures as spiritual intercessors paralleled this role of the cloistered nuns. The female exemplars in the church of S. Lucia, however, were not presented as an inspiration to the nuns, who were not their audience, but as public representatives of the piety of the invisible women enclosed behind the walls.

Female imagery also dominates the Dominican church of S. Maria dell'Umiltà. Founded in 1601 by noblewoman Francesca Baglione Orsini, this austere Dominican convent was esteemed for its strict observance and devotion to spiritual perfection.³⁸ Stucco statues depicting virgin martyr saints Agnes, Ursula, Agatha, Cecilia, Catherine of Alexandria, and Barbara, whose lives and martyrdoms attested to virtues of chastity, piety, humility, intellect, heroic fortitude, and faith, are placed in niches lining the nave.³⁹ Above are paintings of other holy women, Mary Magdalene, St. Anne, St. Helen, and St. Catherine of Siena, who had attained the heights of Christian perfection to which the nuns in the cloister at S. Maria dell'Umiltà dedicated their lives. Among the saints depicted, Catherine of Siena, Cecilia, Agnes, Catherine of Alexandria, and Mary Magdalene held special relevance for the Dominican order, further connecting the nuns of this convent to these particular female saints. Catherine of Siena, a Dominican Tertiary, was considered a model of female spirituality. St. Cecilia was regarded as a special protector of the Dominican order, having appeared in various visions to St. Dominic and other Dominican saints, while Agnes, Mary Magdalene, and Catherine of Alexandria had also bestowed divine favor on

several members of the order.⁴⁰ These latter two saints appear again in stucco reliefs flanking the high altar.

Since its origins the Dominican order had particularly venerated Sts. Mary Magdalene and Catherine of Alexandria as protectors due to their association with the preaching and erudition fundamental to the friars' apostolate.⁴¹ *Apostolorum apostola*, Mary Magdalene announced Christ's resurrection to the apostles (John 20: 1–18) and, according to her legend, developed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and related in Jacobus de Voragine's widely read *Legenda aurea* (c. 1255–66), after Christ's ascension she traveled to Marseilles where she preached and converted the pagan population prior to retiring to the wilderness to live a hermitic life in contemplation. The erudite Catherine of Alexandria adroitly defended the Christian faith against fifty pagan philosophers assembled by Emperor Maxentius, converting them and instructing them in the faith before their martyrdom.⁴² Though these female saints were highly esteemed by the Church and their evangelizing accepted as part of their legend, their active apostolate of preaching presented an uncomfortable paradox since it contradicted the teachings of St. Paul who had forbidden women to teach or exercise authority over men (1 Timothy 2: 12). Theologians struggled to rationalize the activities of women like Catherine, Mary Magdalene, or Martha with Pauline prohibition and sought to neutralize the implications of their preaching by declaring that the Holy Spirit had granted this singular privilege to these *exceptional* holy women.⁴³

It is not as erudite preachers but in the guise of intercessors that Sts. Mary Magdalene and Catherine of Alexandria appear in the Chapel of St. Dominic decorated through the patronage of a devout nun in the convent of S. Maria dell'Umiltà, Angela Ottini (c. 1613–99). In the altarpiece, attributed to the school of Francesco Allegrini, the two saints flank the Virgin holding an image of St. Dominic (Fig. 9.5). The subject refers to a much-venerated miraculous image of St. Dominic, popularly believed to be an *acheiropoieta*, in the church of S. Domenico in Soriano (Calabria). According to tradition, in 1530 Fra Lorenzo da Grotteria, a lay brother in the Dominican community of Soriano, experienced a vision in which the three holy women presented him with the image of St. Dominic for the church. Placed according to the Virgin's instructions on the high altar, the image soon became the object of a cult due to its purported miraculous powers, among which was its special efficacy for female fertility and safe childbirth. Demonstrating divine favor to the order, the image was an extremely popular subject in Dominican churches of both male and female communities.⁴⁴ In the altarpiece in S. Maria dell'Umiltà, the three holy women present an image of St. Dominic that retains the late fifteenth- to early sixteenth-century style and iconic character of the original. Here the position of the monk of Soriano is assumed by the viewer of the altarpiece to whom the image is presented. The relatively static poses of the saintly women reinforce the contemplative, iconic character of the altarpiece. Suor Angela Ottini, who according to her convent's necrology, covered the walls of her



9.5 Attributed to the School of Francesco Allegrini, *Virgin and Sts. Mary Magdalene and Catherine of Alexandria with the Image of St. Dominic of Soriano*, Santa Maria dell'Umiltà, Rome

cell with printed images of saints, to which she continually appealed for spiritual aid,⁴⁵ may well have favored this rather conservative iconic representation of the subject. A more dramatic narrative interpretation of the same subject was depicted in Pier Francesco Mola's altarpiece for the Chapel of St. Dominic decorated by several Dominican nuns from the Costaguti family in SS. Domenico e Sisto.⁴⁶ Here the Virgin, flanked by Sts. Catherine and Mary Magdalene, appears seated on clouds in a hazy, golden light and presents the image of St. Dominic to the Dominican friar kneeling in rapt adoration. Although the subject of the *Vision of a Friar at Soriano* honors St. Dominic, founder of the Dominican order, and in both these churches was placed in chapels dedicated to him, it is female saints who play the principal role, functioning as vehicles to bestow divine favor. This particular subject of St. Dominic would have borne special resonance in the context of a female convent where nuns through their prayers also served as intercessors to win divine favor for humanity. Furthermore in their own patronage of chapel decorations, nuns emulated the divine patronage of the holy women who donated the image of St. Dominic to the church in Soriano.

St. Catherine of Siena, Dominican Exemplar

While devotional guides and manuals for nuns evoked the lives of female martyrs and holy women as exemplars, nuns were especially advised to model themselves on saints of their order.⁴⁷ Representative of how these saintly models were utilized to construct a public identity for enclosed nuns is the prevalence of images of the fourteenth-century Dominican Tertiary St. Catherine of Siena in the Dominican convent churches of S. Maria dell'Umiltà, SS. Domenico e Sisto, and S. Caterina a Magnanapoli. Her imagery in these churches reflects how female spirituality was characterized by the post-Tridentine Church. Although Catherine had engaged in a public apostolate of charitable works and had played a role in significant political and ecclesiastical events of her day, influencing Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome from Avignon and working for peace and the reform of the Church, her principal biographer, Raymond of Capua in the *Legenda maior* (1385–95), emphasized the mystic and ascetic aspects of her life, presenting her as a “suffering vessel of supernatural power” in a manner that conformed with late medieval attitudes toward female sanctity. She endured this great suffering as an “offering of prayer to God for the salvation of souls.” The *Legenda maior* established St. Catherine of Siena as a popular model for post-Tridentine nuns, but, as Karen Scott has noted, within the religious context of the period that emphasized inner spiritual life and enclosure for religious women, the only relevant aspects of Catherine's life for nuns were the ascetic and mystical ones, not her public apostolate.⁴⁸ It was her ardent prayers for intercession, mystical experiences, and fervent practice of the sacraments of Penance and Communion that offered ideal examples of religious

values privileged by the post-Tridentine Church.⁴⁹ Catherine's imitation of Christ and divine union had empowered her apostolate of attaining salvation for souls. While she effected this mission both in her cell and in the public world, literature directed to post-Tridentine nuns promoted the idea that they could accomplish a similar mission of salvation from within the cloister through their attainment of spiritual perfection and the power of their prayers.

Catherinian iconography was transformed from late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century images that present her as an active and heroic model of sanctity to images in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which emphasize her visionary or contemplative experiences.⁵⁰ It is in the guise of these images depicting her special union with Christ and her divine rewards that she appears in Dominican convent churches in Rome.

On the altar of the Chapel of St. Catherine decorated with marbles, stuccoes, and paintings in 1632 at the expense of Innocentia Giustini, a nun in the convent at SS. Domenico e Sisto, is a painting of the *Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine of Siena*, attributed to Francesco Allegrini.⁵¹ During the formative phase of her spiritual development, Catherine, who had dedicated her virginity to Christ, sought his aid in perfecting her faith to confirm her surrender to him. His promise, "I will espouse you to me in faith," is recalled in the inscription over the chapel arch. The altarpiece relates to Raymond of Capua's description of the mystical espousal that occurred on Shrove Tuesday, when Christ appeared to Catherine praising her for turning her back on the worldly delights enjoyed by others and setting her heart on him as the only object of her desire. While he spoke, the Virgin Mary, St. John the Evangelist, St. Paul, St. Dominic, and David with his harp appeared with him. Taking Catherine's right hand, the Virgin held it toward Christ who placed a gold ring set with four pearls and surmounted with a diamond on her finger. In the altarpiece, however, it is St. Dominic, rather than the Virgin, who supports Catherine's outstretched arm.⁵² This departure from Raymond's account may reflect a desire on the part of Sister Innocentia Giustini to highlight the founder of her order and the co-titular of her church. Her particular devotion to both Sts. Dominic and Catherine, noted in the chronicles of the convent, is reflected in her patronage.⁵³

Derived from the biblical Song of Songs, the concept of mystical marriage, originally interpreted as a marriage between God and the Church or the Soul, evolved into the idea of the Christian virgin as the bride of Christ, and by the late medieval period the *sponsa Christi* metaphor had become particularly associated with female monasticism.⁵⁴ The Song of Songs was a central text in Sixteenth-century nuns' spiritual lives, and its espousal imagery filled the devotional literature they read. Its prevalence extended as well to the seventeenth-century musical repertoire that was sometimes performed by or written by cloistered women.⁵⁵ Nuns were considered the brides of Christ in the mode of St. Catherine of Siena or her prototype St. Catherine of Alexandria. Like St. Catherine, the ideal virginal nun turned her back

on worldly pleasures and focused her desire solely on Christ. As Christ's bride, the nun, like St. Catherine, was empowered as an intercessor for salvation. The theme was a means of affirming a relative autonomy for cloistered women in the Church by embracing the authority of their Divine Spouse.

Another visionary episode that represented an intensification of Catherine's union with Christ was the mystical exchange of hearts, a subject represented on one of the lateral walls of the Chapel of St. Catherine in SS. Domenico e Sisto and in one of the paintings on the upper wall of the nave in S. Maria dell'Umiltà. In response to Catherine's plea for a clean heart and renewed spirit so that she might more completely submit her will to Christ, he appeared and took her heart, replacing it with his own glowing heart a few days later after she had been absorbed in prayer. From this time on her visionary experiences at Communion increased.⁵⁶ Implicit within this episode are themes of prayer, desire for spiritual perfection, and Eucharistic devotion promoted by the post-Tridentine Church and particularly expressive of the ideal life of nuns.

St. Catherine appears in the altarpieces of chapels dedicated to the Madonna of the Rosary in both SS. Domenico e Sisto and S. Caterina a Magnanapoli. According to tradition, the rosary, a chaplet of beads forming the basis of three cycles of meditations on the mysteries of the Virgin Mary, had been given to St. Dominic (1208) as an aid to counter the Albigensian heresy, and since the fifteenth century it had been promoted as a form of prayer by the Dominicans. For their devotion to the Virgin, two sisters, Suor Ortensia and Suor Maria Caterina Celsi, in 1652 decorated the Chapel of the Virgin of the Rosary in SS. Domenico e Sisto.⁵⁷ In order to render more effective the individual daily recitation of the Rosary observed by Dominican nuns, Suor Innocentia Giustini while she was prioress (elected 1624) had instituted the practice of a communal recitation in the nuns' choir by both the professed choir nuns and the lay nuns (*converse*) of the community at SS. Domenico e Sisto.⁵⁸ In Giovan Francesco Romanelli's altarpiece of the *Madonna of the Rosary* the Virgin seated on clouds hands a string of rosary beads to St. Dominic while the Christ Child, holding a second chaplet of beads, directs his attention toward St. Catherine, kneeling on the right of the composition. Although a Tertiary, Catherine is garbed in the black veil of a Dominican nun as she was often shown in the seventeenth century. When the Dominican nuns of S. Caterina a Magnanapoli undertook the redecoration of their church's lateral chapels at the beginning of the eighteenth century, they furnished the Chapel of the Rosary with a new painting of the *Madonna of the Rosary* by Giuseppe Passeri (c. 1705). Here St. Dominic receives the rosary from the Madonna with humble gratitude while the infant Christ gazes down to St. Catherine, kneeling in prayerful adoration and dressed like the convent's Dominican nuns. A contemplative spirit of devotion pervades the picture. This popular subject celebrated the divine favor shown to the Dominican order and to St. Catherine of Siena as well as highlighting the devotional practices of the nuns who daily recited the Rosary.

Comprising part of the early eighteenth-century campaign of embellishments at S. Caterina a Magnanapoli, two other paintings, by Luigi Garzi, exalt St. Catherine's divine reward for her spiritual perfection. In the Chapel of All Saints (c. 1701–02), she appears as principal protagonist in the altarpiece of *St. Catherine and the Glory of All Saints* (Fig. 9.6). Attired as a Dominican nun and wearing her



9.6 Luigi Garzi, *St. Catherine and the Glory of All Saints*, c. 1701–02, Santa Caterina a Magnanapoli, Rome

crown of thorns, she is received into heaven by the Virgin Mary who recommends her to the Trinity above while indicating other saints below. Occupying the foreground are Sts. Peter, John the Evangelist, and Paul, saints who had appeared to Catherine in a pivotal childhood vision and were especially venerated by her.⁵⁹ An analogous theme is depicted in Garzi's nave vault fresco of the *Glory of St. Catherine* (c. 1700–12) where, amidst the heavenly hosts, angels hold the three crowns of sainthood over St. Catherine who kneels before a welcoming Virgin Mary, while Christ above bestows his blessing.

A sculpted relief of *St. Catherine of Siena in Ecstasy* above the high altar provides a highly dramatic focal point in S. Caterina a Magnanapoli. Designed in the late 1660s by Melchiorre Caffà at the expense of Suor Camilla Peretti, grandniece of Sixtus V, the white marble figure of the saint stands out against a warmly colored polychrome marble background framed by black and white Corinthian columns.⁶⁰ Half-kneeling on angel-filled clouds, her deeply carved drapery aflutter, she is swept upward in ecstasy. Wearing her crown of thorns she gazes up in rapture to the glory of God the Father in the dome over the presbytery. In the intermediate levels of the altar, the dove of the Holy Spirit in an aureole and a shining cross held by a group of stucco angles complete the allusion to the Trinity. Catherine's intense Eucharistic devotion is evoked in the placement of her image directly above the ciborium that conserves the Communion host (body of Christ) on the high altar (the sumptuous eighteenth-century ciborium now on the altar replaced a similarly rich one present in the seventeenth century).⁶¹ Her reception of the sacrament of Communion precipitated many of her mystical experiences in which her soul was totally unified with God. In Catherine's *Dialogue*, dictated during her mystical experiences, levitation is described as characteristic of the unitive stage of spiritual development in which the perfect union of the soul with God through love causes the body to be lifted from the earth, and in this state God gives knowledge of himself and the Trinity.⁶² Here in the image above the high altar, we witness Catherine's ecstatic levitation through her Eucharistic union and contemplation of the Trinity. As a saint who had achieved spiritual perfection, Catherine was a model for nuns, but she also was an ideal representative of the spiritual work in which nuns were engaged for Christian society and stood for them as well.

Noble Virgins and Family Identity

One of the primary motives of the enforcement of enclosure was to separate nuns from the influence of their families, regarded as detrimental to the good governance of convents and to the nuns' attainment of spiritual perfection. However, Roman nuns steadfastly maintained their family ties which were of crucial financial and social value to their convents. The population of Roman convents was drawn

from the noble and upper classes, and the esteemed social status of its nuns enhanced a convent's reputation.⁶³ Even when she became a bride of Christ and entered into her new convent "family" into whose institutional identity she was inscribed,⁶⁴ a nun still retained her familial identity that gave her status and empowered her to act as a patron in her monastic community. Although Charles Borromeo had declared that heraldic devices which conveyed a worldly magnificence should be avoided in churches,⁶⁵ many Roman nuns, like secular patrons, paid little heed to this advice. At the ancient, noble Benedictine convent of S. Ambrogio della Massima, nuns acted as the principal patrons of their public church in which they acknowledged their institutional identity through



9.7 De Torres family *stemma* on the high altar, San Ambrogio della Massima, Rome

saints and images particularly associated with their venerable convent. But at the same time, by displaying their family *stemmi* (coats of arms) (Fig. 9.7) on the dome, high altar, chapels, and choir gallery, they proclaimed their natal lineage, honored their families, and asserted their enduring familial identity. While not all nuns marked their patronage with *stemmi*, this same commemoration of family identity can be found in many other convent churches including S. Lucia in Selci, SS. Domenico e Sisto, and S. Maria dell'Umiltà.

Conclusion

In keeping with the mentality of their time, nuns were intensely concerned with providing for the spiritual decorum of their public churches through decorations and liturgical furnishings, viewing this as a way to honor God and the saints, stimulate public devotion, and gain spiritual merit. Sequestered behind walls and grates, nuns' bodies were invisible, physically absent from this public space, yet the decoration of their churches, of which nuns were the principal patrons, imbued these enclosed women with a presence and visibility. These decorations functioned to construct and celebrate nuns' identities as female religious, members of particular monastic communities, and daughters of prestigious families.

The decorations in the public church presented an ideal image of the nuns and their religious communities. In spite of the Council of Trent's effort to ensure sincere vocations and the fervid dedication to a life of spiritual perfection evidenced by many nuns, certainly not all had freely chosen their monastic vocation, and others were tepid in their devotion. But their churches represented their communities within the guise of Church-sanctioned models of female virtues and monastic spirituality. Many of the themes in their decorations – nuns as brides of Christ, the Double Intercession, Eucharistic devotion, devout tears, holy female models – also pervade the musical repertoire of early modern female convents, as recent scholarship by music historians has demonstrated.⁶⁶ By embracing these ideals, nuns and their convents gained authority and honor. They in a sense “played to their strengths,” accepting and valuing their ordained role as chaste brides of Christ and prayerful intercessors. Their churches celebrated this special mission that empowered them and gave them validity within the Catholic Church that restricted women in so many other ways. The metal grates separating their inner spaces from the public church or the grille-covered upper-level choir galleries projecting into naves or transepts called attention to the enclosure that ensured their purity and fostered the spiritual perfection that rendered their prayers efficacious. While imagery inside the cloister displayed a wider range of personal devotional preferences, subjects of paintings and sculptures in the public church established the corporate, female, and spiritual identity of the nuns within a convent.⁶⁷ Promoted as models for nuns, the saintly female exemplars that dominated many decorations became models of the nuns, representing *their* spiritual merit and service to the public. While, to a great extent, post-Tridentine nuns in Rome absorbed and subscribed to the dominant ideals of female spirituality conveyed by the male hierarchy of the Church, they also subtly contested enclosure by claiming a more active and visible role as patrons of their churches and by perpetuating their family identity in some of their decorations. Through an active agency as art patrons of their churches, the invisible nuns manifested a visible presence that connected them to the social fabric of Rome and commemorated the identities of these religious women.⁶⁸

Notes

- 1 H.J. Schroeder, trans. and ed., *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (St. Louis, 1941), 220–221.
- 2 Evelyn Carole Voelker, “Charles Borromeo’s *Instructiones fabricae et suppellectilis ecclesiasticae*, 1577. A Translation with Commentary and Analysis” (PhD dissertation, Syracuse University, 1977); Marilyn Dunn, “Spaces Shaped for Spiritual Perfection: Convent Architecture and Nuns in Early Modern Rome,” in *Architecture and the Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Helen Hills, ed. (Aldershot UK and

- Burlington VT, 2003), 151–176; and Helen Hills, *Invisible City: The Architecture of Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Neapolitan Convents* (New York, 2004), esp. Ch. 6.
- 3 Hills (*Invisible City*, 147, 159–160) notes how the gilded ornamental grille-work that screened choirs drew attention to the invisible virginal bodies of the nuns. The fact that these enclosures hid the nuns' bodies, while their voices could be heard reciting or singing liturgical services, emphasized their symbolic resemblance to angels; see Silvia Evangelisti, *Nuns. A History of Convent Life 1450–1700* (New York, 2007), 113.
 - 4 Dunn, "Spaces," 153.
 - 5 Thomas M. Kealy, *Dowry of Women Religious. A Historical Synopsis and Commentary* (Washington DC, 1941), 1.
 - 6 Giovanni Battista De Luca, *Il religioso pratico dell'uno e dell'altro sesso* (Rome, 1679), 168.
 - 7 Among Carolyn Valone's numerous publications on secular women as patrons of ecclesiastical art and architecture in Rome, see "Women on the Quirinal Hill: Patronage in Early Modern Rome," *Art Bulletin*, 76/1 (1994): 129–146; and "Piety and Patronage: Women and the Early Jesuits," in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, E. Ann Matter and John Coakley, eds (Philadelphia, 1994), 157–184. Also see Marilyn Dunn, "Spiritual Philanthropists: Women as Convent Patrons in Seicento Rome," in *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe*, Cynthia Lawrence, ed. (University Park PA, 1997), 154–188.
 - 8 Maarten Delbeke, "Individual and Institutional Identity: Galleries of Barberini Projects," in *Art and Identity in Early Modern Rome*, Jill Burke and Michael Bury, eds (Aldershot, 2008), 231–246; and Stephanie C. Leone, *The Palazzo Pamphili in Piazza Navona: Constructing Identity in Early Modern Rome* (London, 2008).
 - 9 John Beldon Scott, *Images of Nepotism: The Painted Ceilings of Palazzo Barberini* (Princeton, 1991).
 - 10 Gabriella Zarri, "Gender, Religious Institutions and Social Discipline: The Reform of the Regulars," in *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy*, Judith C. Brown and Robert C. Davis, eds (London, 1998), 208, 212.
 - 11 Gauvin Alexander Bailey, "Italian Renaissance and Baroque Painting Under the Jesuits and Its Legacy Throughout Catholic Europe, 1565–1773," in *The Jesuits and the Arts 1540–1773*, John W. O'Malley SJ and Gauvin Alexander Bailey, eds (Philadelphia, 2005), 188–195.
 - 12 Pierre Salmon, *The Breviary Through the Centuries*, trans. Sister David Mary (Collegeville MN, 1962), 1–26.
 - 13 Carlo Andrea Basso, *La monaca perfetta* (Venice, 1674), 27–29, 99–112.
 - 14 Alberto Zucchi, *Roma domenicana. Note storiche* (4 vols, Florence, 1938–43), vol. 1, 206–208.
 - 15 Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, Conleth Kearns OP, ed. (Wilmington DE, 1980), 48–49.
 - 16 Raymond of Capua, *Life*, 151–152.
 - 17 Karen Scott, *Not Only with Words, but with Deeds: The Role of Speech in Catherine of Siena's Understanding of her Mission* (Ann Arbor, 1989), 352–354.
 - 18 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend. Readings on the Saints*, William Granger Ryan, trans. (2 vols, Princeton, 1993), vol. 2, 23–26; David Mycoff, ed., *The Life of*

- Mary Magdalene and of her Sister Saint Martha. A Medieval Biography* (Kalamazoo, 1989); Anna Jameson, *Sacred and Legendary Art* (2 vols, n.p., 1896), vol. 1, 381–383.
- 19 St. Theresa of Jesus, *Way of Perfection*, trans. Alice Alexander (Westminster MD, 1946), 15; Jodi Bilinkoff, *The Avila of St. Teresa: Religious Reform in a Sixteenth-Century City* (Ithaca NY, 1989), 134–136; Agostino Valerio, *Ricordi di Monsignor Agost. Valerio, vesc. Di Verona Lasciati alle Monache nella sua visitazione fatta l'Anno del Santis. Giubileo MDLXXV* (Venice, 1575), 8; and Francesco Beretta, *Lettera d'istruzioni ad una monaca novizia* (Padua, 1724), 75–76.
- 20 Marilyn R. Dunn, “Nuns as Art Patrons: The Decoration of S. Marta al Collegio Romano,” *Art Bulletin*, 70 (1988): 451–477, esp. 458–461; and Tanya J. Tiffany, “Visualizing Devotion in Early Modern Seville: Velázquez’s *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 76 (2005): 433–453, esp. 439–442.
- 21 As discussed and quoted in Jodi Bilinkoff, “Woman with a Mission: Teresa of Avila and the Apostolic Model,” in *Modelli di santità e modelli di comportamento: Contrasti, intersezioni, complementarità*, Giulia Barone, Marina Caffiero, and Francesco Scorza Barcellona, eds (Turin, 1994), 299.
- 22 Valerio, *Ricordi*, 37–38; and Beretta, *Lettera*, 70–71.
- 23 See Marilyn Dunn, “Piety and Agency: Patronage at the Convent of S. Lucia in Selci,” *Aurora*, 1 (2000): 29–59.
- 24 Beretta, *Lettera*, 50; Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, “The Heroics of Virginité: Brides of Christ and Sacrificial Mutilation,” in *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Literary and Historical Perspectives*, Mary Beth Rose, ed. (Syracuse NY, 1986), 29–71; and John Bugge, *Virginitas: An Essay in the History of a Medieval Idea* (The Hague, 1975).
- 25 *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 3, *Augustine: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises*, P. Schaff, ed. (Peabody MA, 1994), 418; and Bugge, *Virginitas*, 148.
- 26 Basso, *La monaca*, 113–125.
- 27 Carolyn Walker Bynum, “Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1991), 119–150; E. Ann Matter, “Interior Maps of an Eternal External: The Spiritual Rhetoric of Maria Domitilla Galluzzi d’Acqui,” in *The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics*, Ulrike Wiethaus, ed. (Syracuse NY, 1993), 60–73; and Jodi Bilinkoff, *Related Lives: Confessors and Their Female Penitents 1450–1750* (Ithaca NY, 2005), 92–94.
- 28 Frederick J. McGinness, “*Roma Sancta* and the Saint: Eucharist, Chastity, and the Logic of Catholic Reform,” *Historical Reflections*, 15/1 (1988): 99–116.
- 29 Schroeder, *Canons and Decrees*, 224; and Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), *Visita Apostolica*, n. 114, fasc. 1.
- 30 Beretta, *Lettera*, 73–74; and Alphonsus Rodriguez, *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection* (3 vols, New York, 1855), vol. 2, 433–445.
- 31 Nuns’ devotion to the Eucharist is also reflected in the Eucharistic theme of motets performed by Italian nuns in some convents during the Elevation of the host, in which music expressed the emotional elation of the communicant. See Robert Kendrick,

- Celestial Sirens: Nuns and Their Music in Early Modern Milan* (Oxford, 1996), 368–369; and Colleen Reardon, *Holy Concord Within Sacred Walls: Nuns and Music in Siena, 1575–1700* (Oxford, 2002), 170–171.
- 32 McGinness, “*Roma Sancta*,” 106–107; and Sara F. Matthews Grieco, “Models of Female Sanctity in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy,” in *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present*, Lucretta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri, eds (Cambridge MA, 1999), 168–169.
- 33 Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987), 27–74; and Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens*, 175–176, 358–361. He notes that the Double Intercession figured as the theme of music composed by the seventeenth-century Milanese nun Chiara Margarita Cozzolani.
- 34 Rodriguez, *The Practice*, vol. 1, 236–237; Basso, *La monaca*, 307; Valerio, *Ricordi*, 36–37; and Gabriella Zarri, “Ursula and Catherine: The Marriage of Virgins in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, E. Ann Matter and John Coakley, eds (Philadelphia, 1994), 238–239.
- 35 Herwarth Röttgen, *Il Cavalier Giuseppe Cesari d’Arpino: Un grande pittore nello splendore della fama e nell’incostanza della fortuna* (Rome, 2002), 493.
- 36 Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford, 1991), 170–171, IX. x (23–24).
- 37 Valerio, *Ricordi*, 15.
- 38 Domenico Bertucci, *Istoria della vita ed azioni di Francesca Baglioni Orsini fondatrice del monastero di S. Maria dell’Umiltà di Roma* (Rome, 1753), 204.
- 39 Jameson, *Sacred and Legendary Art*, vol. 2.
- 40 Zucchi, *Roma Domenicana*, vol. 1, 52; and F.C. Lehner, *Saint Dominic: Biographical Documents* (Washington DC, 1964), 174–176.
- 41 Antonino Barilaro, *San Domenico in Soriano* (Soriano Calabro, 1967), 20; and Katherine Ludwig Jansen, “Maria Magdalena: Apostolorum Apostola,” in *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity*, Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker, eds (Berkeley, 1998), 73.
- 42 Jansen, “Apostolorum Apostola,” 57–96; and Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 1, 374–383, and vol. 2, 334–341.
- 43 Alcuin Blamires, “Women and Preaching in Medieval Orthodoxy, Heresy, and Saints’ Lives,” *Viator*, 26 (1995): 135–152.
- 44 See Barilaro, *San Domenico in Soriano*.
- 45 Archivum Generale Ordinis Praedicatorum (AGOP) XII. 8000 Mon. Ab Humilitate, “Libro delle memorie delle nostre monache defonte di questo monastero di S. M. Del Hum.ta.”
- 46 Virginia Bernardini, Andreina Draghi, and Guia Verdesi, *SS. Domenico e Sisto* (Rome, 1991), 84–86.
- 47 Valerio, *Ricordi*, 42; and Beretta, *Lettera*, 42, 79.
- 48 Observations and quoted passages are from Karen Scott, “St. Catherine of Siena, ‘Apostola,’” *Church History*, 61/1 (1992): 34–46, esp. 34–36. Also see Karen Scott, “Mystical Death, Bodily Death: Catherine of Siena and Raymond of Capua on the Mystic’s Encounter with God,” in *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their*

- Interpreters*, Catherine M. Mooney, ed. (Philadelphia, 1999), 136–167; and John W. Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power: Female Saints and Their Male Collaborators* (New York, 2006), Ch. 9.
- 49 Lidia Bianchi and Diega Giunta, *Iconografia di S. Caterina da Siena*. Vol. 1, *Immagine* (Rome, 1988), 107.
- 50 Grieco, “Models of Female Sanctity,” 169–172.
- 51 Bernardini et al., *SS. Domenico e Sisto*, 63–64; and Archivio del Monastero del SS. Rosario (AMR), Suor Domenica Salamonia, “Memorie del Monastero di SS. Domenico e Sisto,” 5:72. Also see Röttgen (*Il Cavalier*, 534–536) who attributes the painting to Flaminio Allegrini.
- 52 Raymond of Capua, *Life*, 106–108.
- 53 Raimondo Spiazzi, *Cronache e fioretti del monastero di San Sisto all’Appia* (Bologna, 1993), 409–410.
- 54 Bugge, *Virginitas*, esp. Chs 3 and 4; E. Ann Matter, “Mystical Marriage,” in *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present*, Lucretia Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri, eds (Cambridge, 1999), 31–41.
- 55 Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens*, 166–169, 244–245, 255; and Kimberlyn Montford, “Music in the Convents of Counter-Reformation Rome” (PhD dissertation, Rutgers University, 1999), 148–149, 157.
- 56 Raymond of Capua, *Life*, 174–175; and Thomas McDermott OP, *Catherine of Siena. Spiritual Development in Her Life and Teaching* (New York, 1989), 49–50.
- 57 Archivio del Monastero del SS. Rosario, Domenica Salamonia, “Memorie del Monastero di SS. Domenico e Sisto,” 5:72v; Bernardini et al., *SS. Domenico e Sisto*, 51–61.
- 58 Spiazzi, *Cronache*, 409–410.
- 59 Raymond of Capua, *Life*, 29–31.
- 60 Mario Bevilacqua, *Santa Caterina da Siena a Magnanapoli* (Rome, 1993), 97–99.
- 61 Bevilacqua, *Santa Caterina*, 104–105.
- 62 Raymond of Capua, *Life*, 181–186, 288–297; and McDermott, *Catherine of Siena*, 38, 41–43, 50–51, 61–64, 211–212. Also see Bevilacqua, *Santa Caterina*, 98–99, for his relation of the altar’s imagery to Catherine’s writings on divine light.
- 63 Helen Hills, “‘Enamelled with the Blood of a Noble Lineage’: Tracing Noble Blood and Female Holiness in Early Modern Neapolitan Convents and Their Architecture,” *Church History*, 73/1 (March 2004): 1–40, esp. 1–2.
- 64 See K.J.P. Lowe, *Nuns’ Chronicles and Convent Culture in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy* (Cambridge, 2003).
- 65 Voelker, *Instruktionen fabricae*, 450.
- 66 Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens*, 166–169, 175–176, 358–361, 369, 427; Montford, “Music,” 177; Reardon, *Holy Concord*, 170–171.
- 67 Craig Monson, *Disembodied Voices: Music and Culture in an Early Modern Italian Convent* (Berkeley, 1995), 32, 103–104, notes a similar pattern in Bologna. Also see Dunn, “Spaces,” 155; and Helen Hills, “The Housing of Institutional Architecture: Searching for a Domestic Holy in Post-Tridentine Italian Convents,” in *Domestic Institutional Interiors in Early Modern Europe*, Sandra Cavallo and Silvia Evangelisti, eds (Aldershot, 2009), 135–141.

- 68 Scholars of music history have noted how the disembodied voices of music-making nuns could render the presence of these invisible women in their public churches and re-project their status into the life of the city. Both visual imagery and music in the public church were important vehicles of communication of convent values and identity to the outside world. See Monson, *Disembodied Voices*; Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens*, 421; Reardon, *Holy Concord*, 47–48; and Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence* (Chicago, 2006), 216–224. On the musical cultural of female convents in Rome see Kimberlyn Montford, “Music” and “Holy Restraint: Religious Reform and Nuns’ Music in Early Modern Rome,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 37 (2006): 1007–1026.