

## *Conversio Sancti Pauli: Paul's Conversion as a Universal Call to Discipleship in a Catalán Sermon by Vicent Ferrer\**

### RESUMEN

El Cristianismo ha sido testigo de numerosas conversiones de alto perfil. Puede argumentarse persuasivamente que la conversión de San Pablo fue un evento significativo que formó el futuro del cristianismo. También se puede decir que es probablemente el más comentado desde el principio hasta nuestros días. Esto explica por qué la conversión de San Pablo finalmente ha ganado un lugar en el calendario litúrgico occidental desde el siglo XIII. San Vicente Ferrer tenía como su principal misión para convertir a las multitudes a la fe cristiana. Tendría una enorme omisión de su parte no haber predicado sobre la conversión de Pablo. El sermón fue predicado basado en la *themata*, extraído de Mateo 20:14 – *Volo et novissimo huic dare sicut et tibi* (elegir para dar a ésta como os doy) – y de la parábola de los obreros de la viña. La intención de Vicente fue proponer la conversión de San Pablo como ejemplo universal y paradigma para la conversión de los infieles, clérigos, religiosos y cristianos laicos.

### ABSTRACT

Christianity has witnessed numerous high profile conversions! It can be argued persuasively that the Conversion of St. Paul was a significant event that shaped the course of Christianity. It can also be said that it is probably the most commented upon from the beginning up to our time. This explains why the Conversion of St. Paul eventually earned a place in the western liturgical calendar as early as the thirteenth century. St. Vicent Ferrer had as his main mission to convert the multitudes to the Christian faith. It would have an enormous omission on his part not to have preached about the Conversion of Paul. The sermon was preached by based on the *themata* form Matthew 20: 14 – *Volo et huic novissimo dare sicut et tibi* (I choose to give to this last one as I give to you) - drawn from the parable of the Laborers of the Vineyard. Vicent's intent was to propose the Conversion of St. Paul as a universal example and paradigm for the conversion of unbelievers, clergy, religious, and Christian laity.

Christianity in its long history has witnessed numerous high profile conversions, far too many to summarize even in a short list. There is little disagreement, if any, that the Conversion of St. Paul was a significant event that shaped the course of Christianity. It can also be said that it is probably the most commented upon from the beginning up to our time. Paul's conversion, however, has a number of unique qualities that sets it apart from all of the others but that is not our concern here.<sup>1</sup> It does explain why the Conversion of St. Paul eventually earned a place in the western liturgical calendar as early as the thirteenth century. It has maintained that position even after the reform of the liturgical calendar inspired by the Second Vatican Council that resulted in the demotion of some saints and in some cases complete expungement. In the case of Paul's special feast it is celebrated January 25 today by Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, and in some ecumenical settings that include the Orthodox. A corollary development that hardly surprises are the sermons preached for that feast day that must indeed be legion.

This study is part of an ongoing series of studies that I am carrying out on St. Vicent Ferrer's sermons whose focus is a specific person, what can be properly called hagiographical sermons.<sup>2</sup> The sermon preached by the extraordinary Dominican

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1 See my article, «St. Paul and Apostolic Succession.» *Inside the Vatican* 19, 8 (2011) 46-49.

2 My Vicent studies of this nature to date are: «*Sancte Agnetis, mârîtir e verge*: A model virgin for laity and clergy in St. Vicent Ferrer's Catalán Sermon.» *Catalan Review* 30 (2016) 33-50; Ibid, «A little more than the angels: Anthropology and the *Imitatio Christi* in a Catalan sermon by Vicent Ferrer on St. James the Greater.» *On the Shoulders of Giants: Essays in Honor of Glenn Olsen*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015, pp. 179-207; Ibid, «St. Vicent Ferrer's Catalan Sermon on St. Thomas Becket.» *Estudios de Filología e Historia en Honor del Profesor Vitalino Valcárcel*. Vol 1. 2 vols. Veleia Anejos Series Minor, 32. Vitoria-Gazteiz: Universidad del País Vasco, 2014, pp. 285-301, Ibid, «St. Constantine the Great and St. Helena in St. Vicent Ferrer's Catalan Sermon on Pope Sylvester.» *Saint Emperor Constantine and Christianity*. II. Niš, Serbia, 2013, pp. 251-64; Ibid, «St. Vicent Ferrer's Catalan Sermon on St. Martin of Tours.» *Hispania Sacra* 65 (2013) 543-614; Ibid, «St. Vicent Ferrer's Catalan Sermon on Saint Mary Magdalene.» *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 40 (2010) 415-33; Ibid, «Vicent Ferrer's Catalan sermon *Beati Petri Apostoli*: An example of canonical and apocryphal sources in popular preaching.» *Harvard Theological Review* 91.1 (1998) 41-57 republished in Alberto Ferreiro *Simon Magus in Patristic*,

St. Vicent Ferrer (1350-1419) for that solemnity chose as the *themata* Matthew 20: 14 – *Volo et huic novissimo dare sicut et tibi* (I choose to give to this last one as I give to you) - drawn from the parable of the Laborers of the Vineyard.<sup>3</sup> The opening section of the sermon clarifies why Vicent chose this verse from this parable when speaking about Paul's conversion. This is, moreover, one of the few sermons by Vicent where he scarcely relied on the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus Voragine.<sup>4</sup> Vicent's intent was to propose the Conversion of St. Paul as a universal example and paradigm for the conversion of unbelievers, clergy, religious, and Christian laity.

Vicent was quick to emphasize the special nature of the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. He noted that the marvelous feast being celebrated was different because no other saint's conversion was commemorated in this special way.<sup>5</sup> He mentioned that Paul lived a bad life, had been unfaithful, and rebellious towards the holy Catholic faith (*Ere hom de mala vida, infel e rebel.le a la santa fe catòlica*, p. 71) as a way to emphasize the dramatic nature of the subsequent conversion. This contrast between the pre and post converted Paul was already made clear in the Acts of the Apostles by Luke and by Paul.<sup>6</sup> The conversion of Paul, moreover, Vicent believed was an opportunity for Christians to be instructed about the necessity of their own ongoing conversion.<sup>7</sup>

An important matter that Vicent needed to address was the relationship, in terms of apostolic authority, between Paul and Peter. This was important because in the ensuing centuries Pe-

*Medieval, and Early Modern Traditions*. [Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, 125] E. J. Brill: 2005, pp. 241-260.

<sup>3</sup> The sermon is in Sant Vicent Ferrer. *Sermons*. Volum V. Ed. Gret Schib. Els Nostres Clàssics, Obres Completes dels Escriptors Catalans Medievals, Col·lecció B, (Volums en Quart), Volum 8. Barcelona: Fundació Jaume I, Editorial Barcino, 1984, pp. 71-80.

<sup>4</sup> See Ferreiro, «*Sancte Agnetis, màrtir e verge*,» pp. 33-50.

<sup>5</sup> *Per ço és feta festa de la conversió de sent Pau e no dels altres sants, car fo feta maravellosament*, p. 71.

<sup>6</sup> The initial conversion from Luke's perspective is in Acts 9: 1-19. Paul later in chapter 26: 12-18 retold of his conversion in a hearing in King Agrippa's court. In Galatians 1: 13 where he confessed, «For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the Church of God violently and tried to destroy it.»

<sup>7</sup> *Per la qual nosaltres cristians havem instrucció que devem fer aquesta conversió, e és a nosaltres necessària*, p. 71.

ter and Paul will be recognized as the founding martyrs of the See of Rome and hailed respectively as the apostles to the Jews and Gentiles. Even so, very early an important distinction was made between them, so that eventually only Peter was identified as the source of apostolic succession for the Bishop of Rome. Insofar as the apostolic succession is concerned Peter became the pre-eminent because Paul could not be numbered among the foundational 12 apostles of the Church, much less as the thirteenth. This was already taught in the late first century in the book of Revelation. Matthias had been chosen to replace Judas to reconstitute the number of Apostles to 12. Paul did not meet the necessary criteria to be one of the 12 as set forth in the Acts of the Apostles. The New Jerusalem, symbol of the Church, was said to be founded on twelve foundations stones. No one, not even the eminent Paul, could be added as a thirteenth foundation stone of the Church.<sup>8</sup>

With this broader background we can begin to understand why Vicent chose as his *themata* Matthew 20: 14. The climactic moment in the Parable of the Laborers of the Vineyard is when the owner of the vineyard said to the one who had worked all day and demanded more wage than the last who worked only one hour, «I choose to give to this last one as I give to you.» No one was rewarded on the basis of length of service. The parable is not literally about labor in the workplace where wages are distinguished for time worked; this is about the wage of eternal life that is not based on how long one has been 'working' for the Lord. What has any of this have to do with Paul and Peter Vicent proceeded to explain!

Vicent established the primacy over Paul by appealing to Sacred Scripture and the image of both apostles in the *bull* of

<sup>8</sup> The Acts of the Apostles says this on the criteria needed to replace Judas, «So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us , beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us – one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection,» (1: 21-22). Paul could not claim such knowledge notwithstanding his encounter with Christ which was of a different form. Paul never actually ate with or touched the resurrected Christ; he never encountered the Incarnate Christ. The reference to the twelve foundation stones of the New Jerusalem is noteworthy, «And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, Revelation 21: 14. Paul would have been number 13 had he been considered to have full status with the 12 in every respect; apparently that equality was recognized.

the popes (see figure 1). Rather than appealing to Matthew 16: 15-19 that has the well-known reference to the Keys of the Kingdom where Peter was designated as the Rock; he turned instead to Matthew 10: 2. Vicent on the basis of this verse believed that it demonstrated that Peter is the first apostle in rank among the twelve chosen: «The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter.»<sup>9</sup> Succinctly, Peter is the first among the twelve apostles, '*xii són, aquest primer*.'<sup>10</sup> Paul later was at times simply called the 'Apostle' by the Church Fathers but never insinuating that he was equal to the Twelve; notwithstanding being joined with Peter consistently in the early tradition. Even then, however, the two apostles were considered equal in terms of preaching, but apparently not as a successor of the apostolic college of the 12. With this in mind Vicent referred to Paul as the last - *derrer* - of the apostles chosen [converted] after Jesus had already chosen the Twelve, preached for three years, died and resurrected, ascended to heaven, and many had converted to the Catholic faith.<sup>11</sup> Vicent supported this statement by quoting I Corinthians 15: 9, «For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.» In view that Paul had persecuted the Church of God is the reason why he is considered the last in rank in relation to the Twelve. There was equanimity accorded to Paul with Peter in terms of holiness and dignity by Vicent.<sup>12</sup> Even though Paul was accepted fully by the apostles as having the full gospel and the right to preach and found churches, for the reasons already stated he could not be considered to have parity to the Twelve. In the New Testament, moreover, his having been a persecutor is not cited as the reason for his exclusion, Vicent is the one who brought this matter up in the sermon.<sup>13</sup>

9 The reference is not about which apostle first believed, if that were the case then that honor would fall to Andrew who introduced Peter to Jesus, John 1: 35-42.

10 *En lo evangeli de sent Mateu se trobe que'l primer apòstol fo sent Pere.... allí on fa menció dels apòstols, tots temps se pose primer. xii són, aquest primer, 'quid dicitur Petrus,' p. 71.*

11 *Mas lo derrer fo sent Pau, car Jesuchrist ja havie elegit los XII apòstols qui havien preycat III anys, e ja ere mort e resuscitat, ja se n'ere muntat cels, ja molts se eren convertits a la fe catòlica, e après sent Pau fo convertit, p. 71.*

12 *Però fo en santedat e dignitat equal ab sent Pere, p. 71.*

13 For Paul's acceptance as a legitimate apostle by Peter, James, and John —by extension the other 9— see Galatians 1: 18-20, 2: 6-9.

With the relationship of Peter and Paul clarified Vicent offered as further proof the images on the *bull*a that the popes used. On the basis of all that Vicent had proposed above, it explained why Paul is at all times to the left of Peter in the image and both together made the *bull*a valid (figure 1). It carried the full authority of the two great apostles, founders of the See of Rome through their martyrdom. As further support Vicent quoted the Song of Songs 2: 6, «His left hand is under my head and his right arm embraces me,» that underscores the relationship of Peter and Paul.<sup>14</sup> Paul being on the left is supporting the head who is Peter, while Peter has the superior role of embracing Paul. We have already noted that separating Paul from the Twelve already started as early as the book of Revelation; it was in New Testament Apocrypha where the distinction of Peter and Paul rapidly unfolded, beginning in the *Acts of Peter*. There Paul played the supporting role of Peter when the latter was in a struggle with his arch-enemy, the nefarious Simon Magus.<sup>15</sup> Vicent continued to strive in the sermon to find a balance between Peter and Paul by recognizing their respective charisms and position. When all was said and done, Paul could never have full equal status with Peter on the basis of all that we have established. Vicent after demonstrating to his satisfaction the proper relationship between Peter and Paul moved to the main focus of the sermon: the Conversion of Paul and its relevance for all Christians.

Vicent would have the congregation know that in the Conversion of Paul there are nine things to learn that are desirable for all Christians.<sup>16</sup> The intent in all nine is for Christians to incorporate them in daily life. The nine life lessons in order are: Enlightenment from above [*alta il·lustració*], hard rebuke [*dura reprensió*], right intention [*dreta intenció*], apt injunction [*apta injuncció*], right direction [*certa directió*], dignified reform [*digna emendació*], ocular illumination [*ocular il·luminació*], baptis-

14 *E per co en la bulla del papa tots temps és acompanyat ab sent Pere; aliter no valres la bulla. E en la sinistra part tots temps*, pp. 71-72.

15 For full consideration of the topic consult my monograph, *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval, and Early Modern Traditions*. [*Studies in the History of Christian Traditions*, 125] Leiden: Brill: 2005. Since then I have published several more studies on Simon Magus and currently have two more in process.

16 *En la conversió de sent Pau 9 coses hi són trobades, les quals en la conversió de quiscun cristià se requiren*, p. 72.

mal glorification [*baptismal glorificació*], and corporal restoration [*corporal reffectió*]. It was customary for Vicent to include in his sermons a preamble before engaging the main topics; in this one he bypassed it and went straight to the first topic, perhaps because he had nine themes to address.

Vicent began with a summary of Paul's treatment of Christians before his conversion as related in Acts 8: 1-3; 9: 1-2 to contrast it with the profound conversion that ensued. Paul was described as the greatest persecutor of Christians. Those that he ordered to be stoned had their clothes confiscated. In addition, he received letters from the emperor and princes of the Jews in Jerusalem that gave him permission to persecute Christians at will. It should be remembered that he was present and gave consent to the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr of the Church, «And Saul was consenting to his death» (Acts 8: 1).<sup>17</sup> Vicent continued to accumulate the vile persecution that Paul visited upon Christians as a backdrop to his dramatic conversion; thus making it all the more extraordinary. He cited Paul's own self condemnation when he remembered his misdeeds on some disciples, adding further that he had insulted and blasphemed Christ, «I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him.»<sup>18</sup> Vicent succinctly referred to the decisive and emotional conversion of Paul from Acts 9: 3, «now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him.» This unexpected divine intervention marks the moment when Paul received his Enlightenment from above – *alta il·lustració* – that changed his life forever. Vicent was precise to identify the importance of the Enlightenment of Paul for all Christians. It marked the moment in the conversion where he became aware – enlightened – about his sin and the suffering he caused. This form of Enlightenment is what every Christian ought to experience if they have indeed had an authentic conversion. The *alta*, to use Vicent's expression, identifies that it came from God. In fact Paul claimed that all of his teaching was divinely inspired, «For I did not receive it from man, nor

17 *E per açò encara anave a l'emperador e als prínceps dels juheus de Jerusalem, que li fessen lletres contra los cristians, per tal que-ls pogués perseguir*, p. 72. For the full account of the stoning of Stephen see, Acts 6: 8-15 and 7: 1-60.

18 *I Timothy 1:13, E com trobave alguns dexebles de Jesuchrist, vituperave'ls enormament e-ls blasfemave*, p. 72.

was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1: 12).»<sup>19</sup> Vicent believed that David experienced this Enlightenment when he repented of his sin with Bathsheba, «Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me» (Psalm 51 [50]: 2-3). This form of Enlightenment leads to knowledge of sin that Vicent thought was an essential prerequisite for those considering religious life and that priests ought to continually experience.<sup>20</sup> The Enlightenment of the mind and soul by God is evidence of a living faith that is meant for all lay and clergy.

Vicent continued with this topic by citing this passage from the prophet Jeremiah 2: 23, «Look at your way in the valley; know what you have done.»<sup>21</sup> He asked why the prophet had not said *valle* but instead used *convalle*, he explained that they reflect two types of people on different paths in life. When a man or woman is in a state of sin all of the warnings signs befall them; that is, the consequences that will follow if they continue this way. Their becoming aware of sin puts them on the road to repentance and redemption. On the other hand, those who pride themselves for belonging to a good lineage, educated, and who think they are in possession of virtue are deceptively praising each other. On the surface they appear to be happy and people reinforce this deception by promoting them as beautiful and exalted.<sup>22</sup> When they become aware where their feet are truly going, right away they have contempt for that path. This is what happened to Paul when he became cognizant of his own sin through his Enlightenment from above, so it is desirable that this happens to all believers.<sup>23</sup> Without divine intervention true

19 *E veus act lo que fo primer en la sua conversió. Devets notar encara que en qualsevol conversió de cristià se requer alta il·lustració, que com serà en lo peccat se vulle il·lustrar e haver conexença de son peccat e dolor, p. 72.*

20 *E axí alta il·lustració fa conexença del propri delictes, axí com lo religiós deu considerar la entrada de la religió, per què y és vengut, e lo prevere, què ha a fer e observar, p. 73.*

21 The full text reads, «How can you say, 'I am not defiled, I have not gone after the Ba'als? Look at your way in the valley; know what you have done- a restive young camel interlacing her tracks,» (RSV).

22 *Per ço com, axí com l'om e la muller se veu peccador, totes les ales li cahen, mas quan se veu de bon linatge o científich o altra virtut, exalce's e alegre's, axí com fa lo pagó que-s mire e-s veu bell, exalce's, p. 73.*

23 *Mas quan se mire los peus, encontinent se baxe e-s menyspre. Axí ó feu sent Pau qui, vehent lo peccat, fo il·luminat, e axí ó deveu fer vosalters, p. 73.*

conversion is not possible; such a person blindly follows a path of self-righteousness unaware that the road leads to destruction. Vicent explained in detail the two valleys. A *vall* he said is on flat terrain, whereas a *convallis* is situated between two high mountains. The first mountain is the life of Jesus Christ in this world and that of the saints; the other is the Final Judgement. Every Christian has been placed between the two mountains by God, as the Psalmist said, «Your righteousness is like the mountains of God, your judgements are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O Lord,» (36 [35]: 6). Christians have to make a choice whether they will climb the first mountain to follow in the steps of Jesus and the saints; as for the second mountain, it is the unavoidable Last Judgement that no one can opt out of.<sup>24</sup>

The second lesson that is the longest section of the nine is named hard rebuke [*dura reprehensió*] that Paul received at his conversion. It occurred at the moment when a blinding light felled Paul to the ground and heard Jesus say to him, «Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?»<sup>25</sup> Vicent interjected on Paul's pre-conversion name Saul. The name meant pride and cruelty; after the conversion he was renamed Paul, which means peaceful and humble.<sup>26</sup> It was followed by the short exchange between Paul and Jesus where he learns that it is Jesus who was speaking to him and who he was persecuting. Vicent paused to explain the significance of the three words to Paul, *ego sum Jesus*. Jesus means savior; so at that moment he was demonstrating to Paul his Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Deity. Furthermore, Jesus taught Paul that before Abraham He existed - this Vicent borrowed from John 8: 58.<sup>27</sup> The specific inclu-

24 *Car la vall és aquella que és en terra plana, e convallis és entre dues montanyes altes. La primera montanya és la vida que féu Jesuchrist en aquest món e los seus sants, l'altra és lo juhi divinal que havem a subir, les quals quiscun cristià deu considerar. On, de aquestes montanyes és scrit [a partial quote of the psalm follows], p. 73*

25 *On, com sent Pau fos meravellat de aquella claredat que li vench axí com si fos lamp e caygués en terra, p. 73.*

26 *Saulus se appellave ans que-s convertís, que vol dir 'supèrbia' e 'crueldat.' E après de la conversió fo appellat Paulus, quod interpretatur pacificus et humilis, p. 73.*

27 *E mostrà-li e manifestà-li la sua incarnació, la Passió e la resurrecció. E per ço, llavors quan Jesuchrist volie ensenyar a sent Pau la sua deïtat, dix-li què cogitave què fos Abram, e responch-li Jesuchrist: «Ante quam Abraam fieret, ego um,» p. 73.*

sion of being a Nazarene refers to a flowering that was manifested in Jesus' resurrection from the dead which further denotes four flowers that Vicent identified as: impassibility, agility, clarity, and subtlety.<sup>28</sup> Paul having realized who was speaking to him cried out 'Oh, Lord' to which Jesus responded, «It hurts you to kick against the goads,» – *Durum est contra stimulum calcitrare* - from Acts 26: 13. This exchange is found when Paul was in the court of King Agrippa to whom he related his conversion on the road to Damascus. Vicent said that Paul was marvelously chastised because it led to pain, contrition, and rebuke for his sins. This is the *dura repressió* that God visits upon sinners to lead them to conversion.<sup>29</sup>

Vicent continued with this theme by presenting a lengthy metaphorical story – that I will summarize to explain how Paul was deceived to embrace falsehood. It is about a merchant who went to a wedding with a plate full of silver – *argent* - to spend. The vendor convinced him to sell it for 300 florins. The merchant then saw that the vendor was selling rocks made of glass at a significant price. The merchant bought them believing he had made a great purchase of precious rocks, while the vendor knew they are worthless. The merchant purchased from another vendor pearls that were in fact fish eyes.<sup>30</sup> When the merchant attempted to sell them, he found out they did not have even a third of their value. It was then that he realized the great deception that he had fallen into, so he cried out, «You beast, what have you done? How I have been deceived!» The people in turn consoled him saying, «You have a good and rich father» – *Bonum patrem habetis et divitem* – who will help you.<sup>31</sup>

28 *Christus floruit in sua resurrectione, quoniam resurrexit a mortuis. A denotar 4 flors, co és impassibilitat, agilitat, claritat e soplilitat, p. 73.*

29 *E com ell hac conexença que ere Jesuchrist, dix: «Oo Senyor!» e llavors dix Jesuchrist: «Durum est contra stimulum calcitrare,» e ell estigué molt meravellat e hac en si contrició, dolor e repressió, que és dita contrició de peccats, que non és sinó dura repressió la qual Déus fa al peccador, pp. 73-74.*

30 *Anà-sse'n a hu qui venie pedres de vidre, e ell, cogitant que fossen pedres precioses, comprà-les ab gran preu, com si fossen pedres precioses, e lo venedor sabie que no eren pedres precioses.... axí matex anà a hun altre qui venie huylls de peix, e ell, creent que fossen perles, donà-y tan gran preu com si fossen pedres veres precioses, p. 74.*

31 *E ell, vehent-se decebut, fon torbat e contristat. E entre si ell se reprengué, dient: «O bèstia! e què has feyt? E com só enganat!» Les gens aconsolaven-lo dient: «Bonum patrem habetis et divitem,» qui vos ajudarà e vos proveirà, p. 74.*

The next step for Vicent was to relate this story to contrition for sins, the fruit of *dura reprehensió*. The merchant is an image of the sinner who has expressed contrition for his sins through great pain and rebuke.<sup>32</sup> The plate of silver is the sin of avarice that does not save, instead love of riches lead to perdition. When such a merchant dies in deception and goes to the afterlife without good works, the riches profit him nothing.<sup>33</sup> Without any explicit reference by Vicent this portion of the explanation echoes the lesson of the parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). In an odd mix of metaphors Vicent taught that the glass rocks signify pride and pomposity - *supèrbia e pompositat* -; making them more dangerous. Whereas a cup or bottle of wine can be stored in a box or armoire to infinity, a man cannot be preserved as such in this life.<sup>34</sup> The fish eyes that are white as pearls represent self-indulgent sexual desire - *luxúria* - which he also curiously compared to sperm that is also white.<sup>35</sup> These sinners once they fall into sin come to realize the great deception; they experience pain for having falling into such things. Vicent encouraged them to confide in Jesus Christ who is a good and rich father; his blood is an infinite treasure of redemption for sinners, just one drop would be enough to redeem the entire world.<sup>36</sup> He warned sinners not to be like Judas Iscariot who could have been saved if he had gone to Jesus for forgiveness. Vicent apparently did not believe that Judas had been predestined to destruction, like all people he always had a way to find forgiveness.<sup>37</sup>

32 *Axí deu fer lo peccador: quan ha contrició de sos peccats, reprèn-se, vehent e conexent son delicte, dolent-se molt com lo ha comès, e tal reprehensió és dita contrició de peccats. Aquest mercader és dit lo peccador que, com ha peccat e ha contrició de sos peccats, ha en si gran dolor e reprehensió, p. 74.*

33 *Lo plater de argent és peccat de avarícia, car lo avar no cure sinó de aplegar riqueses, e quan serà mort, dolrà's, per què axí ha mercadegat en l'altre món e és stat decebut, ço és vivint, no fen bones obres, car en l'altre món no li aprofitaran res les riqueses, p. 74.*

34 *Les pedres de vidre són comparades a peccat de supèrbia e pompositat, car són molt més perillosos del vidre, car si una taça o ampolla de vi ere posada en una caxa o armari, serie conservada en infinit, mas l'om no-s pot molt conservar, p. 74.*

35 *Los huylls dels pexos, qui són blanchs a manera de perles, és peccat de luxúria, car axí com la perla és blancha, axí lo sperma és blanch, pp. 74-75.*

36 *Mas tals qui són posats en peccat, deuen confiar de son pare, ço és de Jesuchrist, qui és bon pare e ben rich, car la sua sanch és tresor infinit reement los peccadors, car una gota serie bastant a rembre tot lo món, p. 75.*

37 *E non desfiar axí com féu Judes Escarioth qui-s fore pogut salvar si hagués demanada vènia, recorrent a Jesuchrist, p. 75.*

In the last section Vicent unpacked further the meaning of *reprensió* which means contrition for sins committed. Job is presented as one such example, when he confessed, «I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes» (42: 5-6).<sup>38</sup> The hearing spoken of here is that which leads to recognition of sin; it is brought about by hearing the words of the preachers whose words are not their own, they are from God, as Jesus taught in Matthew 10: 20, «for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.»<sup>39</sup> Vicent paused for a moment to explain in greater detail the word *favilla* as found in the words of Job. It pointed to two things concerning penance: The first is ashes - *cinere* - that signals recognition of death or ones mortality; the second, *favilla* is knowledge of eternal punishment. The ashes point to the example – alluding to Job – of a person who leaves the pleasures of this world and returns to the faith. As the words of the first day of the 40 days of Lent intone, «Remember you are dust and unto dust you will return» (Gen 3:19),» to remind people they are mortal and ultimately belong to God.<sup>40</sup> Vicent believed that these words were a solemn warning that without confession and penance one will suffer in hell.<sup>41</sup> Thomas Tentler reminds us that the norms for confession had already been promulgated at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, «Every Christian who had reached the age of discretion was required by the legislation of 1215 to confess at least once a year. Most Christians probably managed to confess no more than that, at Eastertime. Alain of Lille complained in the twelfth century that clergy as well as laity confessed once a year and even that, he lamented, was more out of habit than sorrow for sin.» Although there was no question about the centrality of confession and the Eucharist that was incessantly preached, it was undermined as Tentler notes, «What looks like a bad attendance record.»<sup>42</sup>

38 *Auditu auris audivi [te, nunc autem oculus meus videt te. Idcirco ipse me reprehendo, et ago poenitentiam in] favilla*, p. 75.

39 *Non enim vos estis, [qui loquimini, sed spiritus patris vestri qui loquitur in vobis]*, p. 75. Paul also said, «And how are they to hear without a preacher,» Romans 10: 14.

40 *Recorderis, frater, quia cinis es et in cinerem reverteris, De favilla patet*, p. 75.

41 *Quan cogite les penes que ha a sostenir en infern del peccat comès, si no-s confesse e-n face penitència*, p. 75.

42 Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977, pp. 70 and 81.

The third lesson to be derived from Paul's conversion is what Vicent called: right intention - *dreta intenció*. This time Vicent centered his attention at the moment where Paul realized that it was Christ whom he persecuted and was commanded by Christ to get on his feet. Paul on the ground asked Jesus, «Lord, what do you want me to do?» (Acts 26: 12-16), in the text, Jesus responded, «But rise and stand upon your feet.»<sup>43</sup> The act of standing was of great significance for Vicent, it is emblematic of a change of attitude and relationship between Paul and Christ. Body language in social settings and in acts of religious piety is of great symbolic importance. Prostrating and kneeling can convey humility, submission, and reverence to someone mortal or divine. Standing, on the hand, can be an expression of equality, respect, or acceptance by someone mortal or divine. When Paul was commanded to stand according to Vicent it conveyed being accepted by Christ. Standing, furthermore, communicates that Paul ceased to persecute Christians and it indicates his obedience to Christ.<sup>44</sup> Vicent thought that these actions were relevant to all Christians. All should demonstrate their right intention by going to a confessor to prevent relapse into sin and fulfill the penance given to them by the priest.<sup>45</sup> All of these bodily movements are done by someone who is standing and willfully moving away from sin. To reinforce the notion of willful movement to obey, Vicent cited David, «I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments,» (Psalm 119 [118]: 60).<sup>46</sup> In a curious fascinating aside Vicent called attention that the first letter of this verse in Hebrew is the eighth letter of the alphabet 'h' that signified two things: fear of eternal punishment and eternal life for those who do good works in this world. Every Christian needs to contemplate that they will go to infernal eternal punishment if they do not confess sins, show contrition, and have good works.<sup>47</sup> Paul exemplified in his conversion the con-

43 *On donchs, com sent Pau fos derrocat en terra per la dita visió, dix: «Domine, quid me vis facere?»* p. 75.

44 *Dicit ibi glossa quod mirabilis conversio fuit ista: Statim se paraverat ad persequendum cristianos. Modo paratus est ad obediendum,* p.75.

45 *Axtí deu fer quiscun cristià: que haje dreta intenció, com se va a confessar, ço és de no tornar pus a peccar e a servir la penitència e ell donada per lo sacerdot,* p. 75.

46 *Paratus sum, [et non sum turbatus, et custodiam mandata tua],* p. 75.

47 *Aquesta auctoritat en ebraych comence per la 8 letra de l'alphabet, que és h, que signifie dues coses: temor de les penes infernals, e la vida que*

fession and contrition that ought to be emulated by all who would desire to become Christian and by those who already are disciples.

The fourth topic he called suitable mandate - *apta injunctió* - Vicent used it to emphasize the central role of the priest in confession. This section was inspired from the moment when Paul went to Damascus to meet a man named Ananias who had been instructed in a vision to meet him. Vicent raised the question, why was Paul sent to meet a mortal man and why in the city of Damascus!<sup>48</sup> He explained that Damascus means the place where one drinks blood - *bibens sanguinem* - it represented the Church where it was said, *bibens sanguinem Christi*; he followed with a paraphrase of Jesus's words about eating His flesh and drinking His blood.<sup>49</sup> Damascus represents the Church where the sinner goes to confess sin. Furthermore, it is not enough to confess to God, is also necessary to have recourse to a priest for confession. If a believer were to say, «Oh, Lord, are you not the supreme father [in a priestly sense]?» There is no other mortal to go to with the power to absolve sin than a priest who is the terrestrial militant of the Church who alone hears confession and imposes penances.<sup>50</sup> Christ has ordained that people ought to confess sin to a priest through whom Christ becomes incarnate. Vicent added that not even Aaron, Abraham, or the holy Fathers had such power; it was because Christ had not yet become man and that is why he did not yet give such power to men.<sup>51</sup> After Christ became man, then he gave this

*havam eternal, si bé haurem obrat en aquest món; e en açò deu esmaginar quiscun cristià: que irà a les penes infernals, eternalment cruciat, si no-s serà confessat e contrit, p. 76.*

48 *Per què-m remeteu a la ciutat o a l'hom mortal [Ananias] que-m digue què he a fer? Per què ni m'ó dius tu? p. 76.*

49 *E aquesta ciuta[t] ere Damàs, que vol dir «bibens sanguinem..... 'bibens sanguinem Christi', quoniam ibi conficitur sanguis Christi, ut patet Jo., VI° ca°: 'Qui manducat meam carnem'.....» p. 76.*

50 *E en açò és dit representar... ço és a la església, quan seràs peccador, e allí confessa tos peccats. A denotar que no abasta confessar-se a Déu tan solament, mas encara al sacerdot. E si tu dehyes: «Oo, Domine! Et non estis vos summus papa?» «E donchs, si vós haveu la potestat de absolre, què.m cal anar a altre?, ell respondrie per semblança, axí com veyge-en lo papa de la Església militant e terrenal, si algú se volie confessar a ell, remetire'l als seus penitenciers, p. 76.*

51 *Axí fa Jesuchrist, qui ordenà que l'hom confés sos peccats a son propri sacerdot, que ans que Jesuchrist se encarnàs, no féu penitenciers, ni Aron ni Abram ni-ls altres sants Pares havien aquella potestat, car encara no ere fet hom Jesuchrist, e per ço no volch donar aquesta potestat als hòmens, p. 76.*

power to men, citing Matthew 9: 8 «When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.» Vicent responded to those who might say, «Those times were good when one confessed only to God» to which he responded that it was bad, since no one could have remission of sins, there was no salvation. Now, however, there is the power through priests that removes sin, citing Jesus's words to the apostles in John 20: 23 «If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.»<sup>52</sup> He noted that from the time that Adam sinned until the Advent of Jesus - which he said amounted to five thousand years - no one had this power.<sup>53</sup> Vicent was also known to have created imaginary dialogues that he acted out in theatrical fashion in the course of the sermon, something akin to a one person act. Vicent did so when he turned to the story of the ten lepers who asked Jesus to heal them. At Luke 17: 14, the lepers were commanded by Jesus to, «Go and show yourselves to the priests. And as they went they were cleansed.» Vicent said of the priests in question that they were evil and indignant who wanted to kill Christ. Vicent has the lepers in his improvised dialogue asking Jesus, «O, Lord, why do you send us to them, they are such bad men? Send us to your mother or to John the Baptist.» Jesus would have responded that they had no such power, his mother was not a man and John was not a priest: only to priests has this power been given and males only at that.<sup>54</sup> Once again Vicent highlighted the central role of the priest in the confession and absolution of sins. He was explaining why it was not enough to confess to God, it was also necessary to recur to con-

52 *Mas après que fon fet hom, llavors la donà, perquè denotà la semblança e equiparància que havie ab los hòmens. Et ideo scribitur (Mt., VIII° ca°): «Glorificaverunt Deum qui talem dedit potestatem hominibus. E si algú deye: «Cert, bo ere aquell temps, que no-s confessavem sinó a Déu,» responch que ans ere mal, car llavors degú no podie haver remissió dels peccats ne-s salvave, ne llavors no-y havie degú que hagués aquesta potestat de remetre peccats, que scrit és (Jo. 2° ca°): «quorum remisieritis peccata, remittuntur et eis» p. 76.*

53 *E llavors del temps que Adam pecaquà a l'adveniment de Jesuchrist, del qual passaren VP" anys, pp. 76-77.*

54 *E remetie'ls als sacerdots, hòmens malvats e indignats qui-l mataren. E si los leprosos li diguessen: «Oo, senyor, e a què-ns remetets a aquells, que mals hòmens són? Remetet-nos a vostra mare o a sent Johan Babtista!» Jesuchrist haguere respost que no havien tanta potestat, car sa mare no ere hom, e als hòmens sols és donada, ne a sent Johan, car no fon prevere: «Quoniam solis presbiteris data est illa potestas,» p. 77.*

fession to a priest. Vicent was concerned about a recurring problem that continues to be problematic today; namely the low attendance of people that go regularly to confession. Tentler is most insightful on this point, «Was it not possible, even logical, to conclude that the telling of sins and the intervention of the priest had become superfluous, that the forgiveness of sins was purely a matter between the contrite man and a forgiving God? There were pronounced tendencies in that direction in medieval theology, and they created tensions that remained until the time of Luther.» What was true elsewhere in other parts of Europe was no less true in the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>55</sup>

The fifth lesson is right direction [*certa directió*] in reference to Paul's blindness when he stood up and was led by two men to Damascus where he would meet Ananias, the one who would restore his sight. So how is this episode relevant to any person? Paul on the ground and blind signified that he was chained to sin and so reflects the condition of sinners. Those in such a state need to have their eyes opened spiritually: this is *certa directió*.<sup>56</sup> If someone were to ask why someone was entering religious life, the response should be: To honor and serve God and to fulfill the vows of a servant.<sup>57</sup> Likewise a priest ought to have the *certa directió* to sustain what he has; furthermore, he should have his eyes opened so as not to be deceived, a warning not to revert to the evil life they had before.<sup>58</sup> If someone, moreover, had been arrogant, pompous, enjoying worldly delights, charging usury, gambling, living in opulence, they should not desire to revive those years lived blindly. To make the point Vicent turned to the story of Sodom and Gomorra and the fate of Lot's wife. He identified the sins committed there that were contrary to nature – *contra natura, que allí se cometie* – that brought down upon the five cities of the plain – *Sodoma e Gomorra, e de les vehines Sobol, So-*

55 Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, p. 19.

56 *Act ha secret, que no-s vehés gens e hagués los huylls uberts*, «e duo per manus ipsum ceperunt et eum traxerunt ad civitatem,» *a dar entendre que quan hom se lleve de terra, ço és, del peccat, deu haver los huylls uberts, ço és, bona intenció*, p. 77.

57 *Car si t'ere dit per què és entrat en religió o per quinya intenció, deus dir «per honor de Déu e servici seu, e per ço que servassa los vots servadors*, p. 77.

58 *Axí matex en lo prevere deu haver la intenció drete a servir allò a què és tengut; deu haver los huylls uberts e que no se'n vege, que no guarden a mala vida, la qual havie de primer*, p. 77.

*cor e Aleale* - the fire of God: lust expressed in homosexuality, lesbianism, and bestiality.<sup>59</sup> Through an angel God warned Lot and his family to flee Sodom. They were further instructed that as they fled not to look back. They were to have their eyes looking forward toward the mountain. Lot's wife looked because her heart was still fixed on her evil life and its pleasures, so she was turned into a pillar of salt. She is an example of a person whose conversion was not complete; her heart was still in Sodom. Vicent chastised those of his own city – priests, students, and rich people who relapsed to their former evil life. In that sense their sin turned them into statues similar to Lot's wife.<sup>60</sup> He added that two hands led Lot and his family out of Sodom, he was alluding to the case of the blind Paul who was also led out by men; the two hands are symbolic of the Mass and preaching. Vicent said that it points to the preaching at Mass where one is thrown to God's mercy for conversion and forgiveness. Vicent referred to Luke 9: 62 to make his point, «No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.»<sup>61</sup> That is what Lot's wife did, it is exactly what Paul did not; he never reverted to his past life and both present a choice that has to be made.

The sixth lesson that Vicent called dignified reform [*digna emendació*] is found when Paul was taken to Damascus. While there he refused for three days to eat and drink water because he was doing penance for three sins that he committed against Christ. Vicent said that Paul identified the three offenses in his first letter to Timothy, «though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him,» (1: 13). Vicent pointed out that is why holy Mother Church through a papal decree promulgated at a council bound believers to fast three times a week. They are: Wednesday, the day that Christ was born; Friday, the day that Christ had his passion and died and Saturday the day that the Virgin Mary fasted.<sup>62</sup> Any Christian who wished to convert must

59 *Per ço com peccaren per foch de luxúria, hòmens ab hòmens, dones ab dones, e en si matexs e ab bèsties*, p. 77.

60 *Axí com los sacerdots e estudiants e hòmens rics e altres de aquesta ciutat; e quan guarden derrere, ço és als delicis que havien de primer e a la mala vida, tornant en aquella són fets estàtues per peccats, axí com la muller de Loth*, p. 78.

61 *Qui retro (id est peccatum) respiciunt (id est, reveruntur), nemo mitens manus ad aratrum*, p. 78. The text of the sermon erroneously identifies it as chapter 11 in Luke.

62 *Seguí's que sent Paul estigué tres dies que no mengà ni begué, e dejunà per tres peccats que havie comesos contra Jesuchrist*. Lo primer, que,

do penance, as enjoined in Luke 3: 8, «Bear fruits that befit repentance.» They were also to fast and practice other afflictions [mortifications] if they truly desired to return to God and save their souls.<sup>63</sup>

The seventh lesson that Paul can teach believers is called ocular illumination [*ocular il·luminació*] and it is found when Ananias finally met Paul face to face.<sup>64</sup> Vicent paraphrased the moment when Ananias came to Paul, who was fasting, to restore his sight, the text from Acts relates, «Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight.»<sup>65</sup> Vicent said this is an example for those who repent of their sins and pray God for forgiveness, even before the Virgin Mary or a saint pray for them. It is rather curious why Vicent would insert this comment about intercessory prayer at this juncture. It seems to be intended to remind believers that forgiveness comes only from God, not from the Virgin Mary or any other saint.<sup>66</sup> I think that Vicent intended it to be a corrective of those who would seek forgiveness through someone – Virgin Mary or a saint – other than God. Vicent cited as his authority the words of Jesus, «For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you,» (Matthew 6: 14). A lesson here is that the injury caused by sin while the person was blind in sin has been removed, therefore they now see. Vicent offered as an example the experience of the blind man that Jesus healed who confessed,

«fuit blasfemus et persecutor contumeliorum»... Unde, in sancta matre Ecclesia statuit papa ex concilio, *que fos dejunat tres dies en la setmana, ço és lo dimecres, car aquell dia Jesuchrist fo venut, e-l divendres, que en aquell dia sufferí mort e passió, e lo dissapte, que lo dissapte dejuná la verge Maria*, p. 78. These are called Ember Days of fasting that emerged as early as Pope Leo I in the fifth century.

63 *Donchs, quiscun cristià que's vol convertir a Deú, deu fer penitència. Ideo dicitur: «Agite ergo dignos fructus penitencie,»..... Devem donchs dejunar e fer altres afflictions, penedint-se, si a Deús nos volem convertir e salvar nostres ànimes*, p. 78.

64 *Ananias, vingué a la casa de sent Pau, quan ell dejunave*, p. 78.

65 «Paule, ecce ego sum missus a Deo, ut tangam te et videas.» Et ecce tetigit eum in capite, et tres gute ad modum scame piscis exierunt de oculis ejus, et vidit. Ideo ipse gracias egit Deo, Acts 9: 17-18, p. 78.

66 *Optindrie [the forgiveness] abans que la verge Maria ne alter sant que pregàs per ell*, p. 78.

«One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see,» John 9: 25. Paul's healing from physical blindness points to the deeper healing of spiritual blindness that all believers should pray to obtain through repentance. Here lies the principle lesson taught here by Vicent.<sup>67</sup>

The eighth lesson is identified as baptismal glorification [*baptismal glorificació*] that is based on the same text from Acts 9: 17-18 where Ananias led Paul to baptism. Vicent did not mince words to condemn those who submit to baptism but then have no good works; he accused them of crucifying Christ again which constitutes a grave sin. Instead, those who are baptized Vicent enjoined need to give alms and make restitution for injuries caused.<sup>68</sup> Vicent turned to the Gospel of Luke 11: 37, 41 to make his point- it is about a Pharisee who came to Jesus and was told to give alms. Vicent was quick to note that any alms given from ill gotten money had no value in this life or in the afterlife. He terminated his section with a reference to Thomas Aquinas who spoke of the nexus between baptism and almsgiving, the latter flowing from the former.<sup>69</sup> The lesson is clear regarding Paul's baptism; right after his baptism he began to make reparation for all of the suffering that he caused as a persecutor of the faith. This exemplary behavior according to Vicent was relevant to all Christians.

The last lesson number nine was identified by Vicent as corporal restoration [*corporal reffectió*] inspired by Acts 9: 9, «And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank – *quia post tercium diem dederunt sibi ad comedendum.*» He used this occasion to address taking communion during Easter Sunday, known as *Pascua Florida* which he said was a reference to flowers in the liturgy. Believers upon ending their fast before Easter Sunday were encouraged to take communion at the very least. Building on his comments in the previous section Vicent noted that afflictions [mortifications], good works, and ashes will count as nothing if communion is not taken during Easter. Worst

67 *E feta la remissió de la injúria, tals qui per peccats eren cechs, se vehen e poden dir illud (Jo., 9º caº): «Unum scio quod cum cecus essem, modo video.» Ideo velimus remittere injurias, ut sic videre possimus, p. 79.*

68 *Car serie vist crucificar Jesuchrist altra vegada, e axí greument peccarien. Mas deuen-se bategar donant almoyna e restituir los torts, p. 79.*

69 *Dicit Magister sententiarum in 4º quod bapismus dicitur redemptio, sic et elemosina dicitur redemptio peccatorum, p. 79.*

still, it constitutes mortal sin.<sup>70</sup> The nexus between baptism, good works, and communion was emphasized by Vicent; central in this scheme is good works. After baptism if good works are lacking, it renders it irrelevant; likewise communion not followed by good works is hypocrisy, an affront to Christ, and a grievous sin. Vicent on a positive note taught that communion followed by sorrow, contrition, and confession of sin with penance will not result in scrupulosity and erroneous holiness.<sup>71</sup> In short, this person lives an authentic Christian life. Vicent compared such a one who takes communion on Easter Sunday to a prince. This prince has conquered a castle where he right away places his flag on a tower or wall as a sign of conquest and victory. It also reflects what Jesus accomplishes in a believer when someone is conquered through baptism and confession. Jesus also plants a flag to celebrate the victory.<sup>72</sup> Vicent turned to St. Augustine from his *In libro de dogmatibus ecclesiasticis* – a work now attributed to Gennadius of Massilia (died c. 496) – and St. Thomas Aquinas's *Scriptum super Sententiis* IV, to bolster his case where both said that it is good counsel to receive communion every Sunday. This is assuming that a person has confessed all sin to a priest, above any mortal sin, before taking communion<sup>73</sup> Vicent added the

70 *Axt matex los cristians deuen assumir aquest mengar, ço és, combregar almenys lo dia de Pascua Florida.....car si lo cristià fa afflictions e altres bones obres, almoynes, portar cilici, etc., no li valrien res, si almenys lo dia de Pascua quiscun any no combregue, car peccarie mortalment, p. 79.*

71 *Combregar, donchs, après de la dolor, contrició e confessió dels peccats e penitència de aquells; no hajam scrúpol e santedat errònea, reputant-nos indignes, p. 79*

72 *E qua dejau combregar lo dia de Pascua, havets-ne semblança, car si algun príncep havie pres o conquistat algún castell e pose-y decontinent en una torre o mur la sua bandera en senyal de conquesta e de victoria, axt matex e Jesuchrist, quan nos guanye per lo bapisme e per confessió de peccats, dummodo ydoneam, vol que prengam la sua bandera en senyal de victòria, pp. 79-80.*

73 *Que quiscun dichmenge de bon consell devem combregar, p. 80.* For the Gennadius text see *De ecclesiasticis dogmatibus*, PL 42: 1213-1222. The text about communion is from chapter 23 (al. 53) – that reads in part, *Quotidie Eucharistiae communionem percipere nec laudo nec vitupero. Omnibus tamen dominicis diebus communicandum suadeo et hortor, sit amen mens in affectu peccandi non sit. Nam habentem adhuc voluntatem peccandi, gravari magis dico Eucharistiae perceptione quam purificari, Et ideo quamvis quis peccato mordeatur, peccandi non habeat de caetero voluntatem, et communicaturus satisfaciat lacrymis et orationibus, et confidens de Domini miseratione, qui peccata piae confessioni donare consuevit, accedat ad Eucharistiam intrepidus et securus.....* PL 42: 1217. See also on Gennadius, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (eds.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 556.

example of Elijah when he fled Jezebel fearing for his life, he sat under a broom tree to die, but instead he fell asleep. The episode describes that an, «Angel of the LORD came again a second time, and touched him, and said, 'Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you,'» (1 [3] Kings 19: 7). Vicent utilized this story to admonish his audience in his closing comments that they too need to arise from their sleep- which is sin – and eat. The food is the bread of communion that is needed on the journey on the way to Paradise.<sup>74</sup> He was also attempting to counter the tendency of infrequent confession and of the Eucharist, as Tentler observes «The long-standing prejudice against frequent communion persisted in the late middle ages: the Eucharist was seldom received for a number of reasons.»<sup>75</sup>

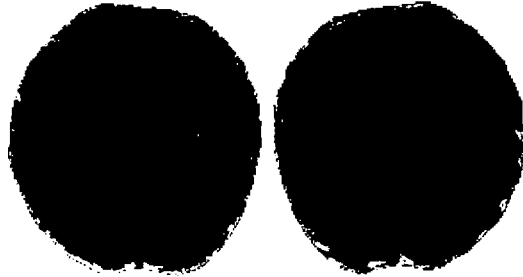
Vicent Ferrer was convinced that the Conversion of Paul served as a paradigm for all Christians who desire a deeper discipleship. He made his case by identifying nine themes that he expounded eloquently. The common theme in all nine is that all Christians should have a profound conversion that opens the spiritual eyes. Even more urgent, without this healing of inner blindness a person can never fully realize the discipleship required by Christ. Vicent was also attempting as best as he could to counter infrequent confession and reception of the Eucharist. Tentler succinctly states, «Nevertheless, the later middle ages witnessed a sharp attack on the neglect of the Sacrament of Penance. The call to frequent confession by synodal statutes in the fifteenth century was echoed time and time again by those who wrote and preached on the forgiveness of sins.»<sup>76</sup> Vicent was not alone in his efforts, he was part of a broader effort by the Church to find a solution.

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<sup>74</sup> *Axí nos devem nosaltres levar del sompni, ço és del peccat, e après menjar, ço és, combregar, per tal que pugam anar al regne de parais*, p. 80.

<sup>75</sup> Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, p. 79. In the ensuing discussion the reasons that he lays out for infrequent reception of the Eucharist are no relevant here, Vicent did not bring them up as a concern in the sermon.

<sup>76</sup> Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, p. 72.



Bulla of Pope Gregory IX

Peter and Paul are identified by the initials *SPA* and *SPE* or *SPASPE* - *Sanctus PAulus and Sanctus PEtrus*. Paul is on the left and Peter on the right (public domain image)



Bulla of Pope Leo X  
(Figure 1, public domain image)