CONTEMPLATION AND THE ACADEMY
THE PROTHEMES OF BONAVENTURE’S SERMONES DOMINICALES AND MINORITE PRAYER

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By virtue of what took place through the passion of the Lord, I, a servant of the cross, composed this present collection of sermons to praise the name of Christ and to honor his sacred cross...1

In Exemplum e letteratura, Carlo Delcorno notes that although they are not sermon models, even the reportationes of Bonaventure’s sermons on Francis of Assisi have a normative value given his theological authority and position as Minister General of the Minorite Order.2 Consequently, a collection of model sermons such as the Sermones dominicales, or Sunday Sermons, edited by Bonaventure sometime between April 24, 1267 and May 17, 1268, are particularly significant; these texts constitute an eminent expression of the Minister General’s desire, on both the theological and institutional level, to direct the preaching endeavors of his Minorite brothers.3 His earlier Commentary on the Gospel of Luke and extensive personal preaching praxis evidence an intense interest in this ministry essential to the Minorites. In particular, Bonaventure’s theological concerns permeate the Sunday Sermons, including a marked interest in prayer evidenced in the prothemes attached to twenty-five of the fifty sermons. As Jacques Bougerol indicates, this unique aspect of the medieval sermon underlines the necessity of prayer.4 This essay will examine the role of prothemes

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2 Carlo Delcorno, Exemplum e letteratura: tra medioevo e rinascimento (Bologna, 1989), p. 46.
