On 8 July 1348 Mengonus fq Fratris Ugolini a strazarius or second-hand clothes dealer of the parish of San Biagio drew up his will. He returned to his wife, Ysabeta, her modest dowry of 100 lire and left her a small gift to help her buy a widow’s gown as well as the use of his household goods. The twelve witnesses to his will included two parchment makers, two smiths, and a cloth dealer. Also present were Ysabeta’s three brothers, Tomas, Bernardus, and Johannes. Serving as principal witnesses to guarantee that Mengonus was of sound mind were two Augustinian friars Nicola and Zacharias and dopnus [dominus] Gerardus, the parish priest of San Biagio.\textsuperscript{1} This rather large gathering was documented by Johannes Laurentii Stephani, a notary also living in the parish of San Biagio. On the same day, Ysabeta and her brothers were joined again by dopnus Gerardus and Johannes Stephani at the house of their father, Figliocharius, known as Charinus, a parchment maker who lived in the same parish, to hear him dictate his will. Charinus returned to his wife, Ursollina, her dowry of 130 lire, gave her use of his household goods as long as she remained a widow, and named his three sons as heirs. Ysabeta, his daughter, received only a token blessing of 20 solidi. The wishes of Charinus were noted by four other men of his trade living in the same parish who served as witness to his will. Within a couple of weeks Ysabeta’s husband and father were both dead, when once again she joined her brothers and the notary, Johannes Stephani, at the side of their mother, Ursollina, on 23 July. Again, her three brothers were named as heirs, while she, the married daughter, received a gift, this time a more sizeable one of 20 lire. Also at the side of her mother acting as witness, was Petrobellus, the brother of Ysabeta’s deceased husband, who shared his brother’s trade and parish. Two days later on 25 July, Petrobellus himself lay ill, dictating his last wishes to Johannes Stephani, as dopnus Gerar dus and most likely Ysabeta looked on. Petrobellus did

\textsuperscript{1} The standard title for priests in Bologna was dopnus.
not have any children but left his young nephew Nicola, Ysabeta’s son, his property, half of which she would receive if Nicola died while still a child. Petrobellus named her as his executor and rewarded her with a bed and bedding. Her brother Bernardus was witness to this arrangement along with eight other residents of San Biagio and their parish priest, dopnus Gerardus. Bernardus was still alive five days later, for he was named heir by his brother Johannes, whom we first saw on 8 July at Mengonus’s side, in his testament of 30 July.2

These five artisans’s wills reveal the strong network of social bonds that existed between artisan families living within a neighborhood circumscribed by the religious boundary of the parish. The notary who lived in the parish helped his neighbors who were his clients. The parish priest came to administer last rites, hear confession, and witness their wills. Neighbors, related by work and marriage, assisted each other to prepare for death and pass on their property. We also see at work within these artisan families, the typical social institutions of late medieval urban Italian life: namely, the use of inheritance divided among a testator’s sons who practiced his trade, and the exclusion from inheritance of daughters due to the use of dowry. What is unusual about this scene of familial and neighborly cohesion among artisans is the epidemic that struck down these individuals forcing them to prepare for death by writing their wills in quick succession.

Similar scenes were taking place during the summer of 1348 in other neighborhoods. The elite citizens of Bologna were faced with the same horrific and unprecedented spectacle of plague. Their wills offer the following set of testamentary scenes of family members of the Dessideri, Caselle, Basacomari, and Bonacatti families linked by marriage that played out in a similar fashion. On 26 June, Andriucia Philipi Dessiderii, a widow of the parish of San Michele dei Leprosetti, stood before the altar of Saint Catherine of the Augustinian Friars’s church of San Giacomo, and dictated her will. She was healthy as she told the notary and nine friars before her that she would leave 50 lire in charitable bequests for the benefit of her soul to their church, her parish church, and the other mendicant churches of Bologna. She requested burial at the Church of San Giacomo. Thinking of her family she provided an

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2 Mem, vol. 229, fols. 9r (Ursollina fq domini Thomacis Ursii), 77r (Petrobellus fq Fratris Ugolini), 77v (Johannes fq Carini); vol. 230, fols. 97v (Mengonus fq Fratris Ugolini), 98r (Figliocharius fq Fratris Donisdei).