If the adjective “minor” connotes a sense of inferiority or a relative lack of importance, Bonaventure’s *Legenda minor* surely confirms this appellation—at least according to most studies dedicated to the Seraphic Doctor’s literary opus. The neglect of the *Legenda minor* in favor of Bonaventure’s *Legenda maior* is evident in the paucity of studies dedicated to this liturgical text, and for that matter, to any Minorite choir legends. While displaying little sustained interest in the *Legenda minor*, scholars are unanimous in following the Quaracchi editors and ascribing this choir legend to Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. The critical text, which comprises sixty-three readings equally divided according to the Octave of the Feast of St Francis, is found in vol. 10 of the *Analecta Francesca.* The widespread diffusion of the *Legenda minor* is striking, but not surprising given the canonical status of the text within the liturgical life of the brothers after the declaration in Paris of the General Chapter in 1266 mandated the destruction of earlier legends. As the Quaracchi editors noted, the earlier attempt in 1898 to collate manuscripts with the *Legenda minor* numbered forty-three codices,

---


but the number could have easily been tripled if Minorite breviaries in various libraries had been included. A study of such breviaries in the Apostolic Vatican library alone underscores the centrality of this *legenda* in the liturgical life of Franciscans. Not only was the *Legenda minor* utilized for the Octave and Feast of St Francis, but also occasionally for the Feast of the Stigmata.

This essay, first of all, examines the *Legenda minor* as Bonaventure’s attempt as minister general to construct the identity of his confreres by reworking the institutional memory of the Poverello through the spatial-theological genre proper to choir *legendae*. Miracles stories are afforded special attention since they illustrate how Bonaventure removed Francis from the category of local thaumaturge and reformulated his memory as that of a universal miracle, accessible to all through contemplation and transferable, so to speak, to any locale. The second section explores the performative nature of the *Legenda minor* as a liturgical text and the architectural context of Bonaventure’s writing by emphasizing the theological significance of light in choir prayer. The final section of this essay takes up selected questions revolving around the date of Bonaventure’s liturgical legend, which is typically assigned by scholars simply in relation to the presumed earlier date of the *Legenda maior*.

**The *Legenda minor* and Franciscan Identity**

Choir legends like the *Legenda minor* are primarily conceived, composed, and received as spatial-theological texts, ritually performed in a designated sacred space and season. The ritual context is the Liturgy of the Hours, where those gathered in prayer enter into a dialogical exchange with the divine interlocutor in the paradox of the paschal mystery. Choir *vitae* function as unique witnesses to a specific communal memory of a saint, whose life of virtue and miraculous deeds are recounted within the dynamics of liturgical prayer and the dominant cultic-cultural identity of the institution in question. Given their essential status within worship, these particular hagiographical texts take on a level of iconicity that is

---