Viator ducens ad celestia:
Eucharistic Piety, Papal Politics, and an Early Fifteenth-Century Motet

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I

On the morning of 26 March 1409 the College of Cardinals, along with over one hundred abbots, bishops, archbishops, and ambassadors from throughout Europe, gathered in the cathedral of Pisa to inaugurate an unprecedented event: a church council intended to oust not one, but two popes. According to the council acts, the first session featured a sermon delivered by the Franciscan friar and cardinal of Milan, Pietro Filargo of Candia (henceforth referred to as Peter of Candia).1 Sitting in the bishop’s throne, clothed in his pluvial and white mitre, Peter provided a masterful defense of

the powers of the council, whose purpose was to end the 20-year old schism between the rival French and Italian popes by putting forward a third candidate. During the previous two decades theologians had painstakingly defended the authority of a general council to remedy the schism; however, it was not until the Council of Pisa that ecclesiastics actually convened such a gathering.

Flanking Peter’s sermon were the ceremonial trappings of a traditional church council. A solemn mass preceded it, and a number of prayers, litanies, and chants, including *Exaudi nos Domine* and *Veni creator spiritus*, followed. But if the ecclesiastical ritual gave the proceedings an air of legitimacy, Peter’s sermon declared their irreconcilable break from traditional canon law by placing supreme authority in the hands of the council rather than the pope. In an ironic twist, the cardinal of Milan usurped the role of pope in presiding over the opening session, and in turn used the occasion to proclaim the irrelevance of the competing papacies. Given his instrumental role on March 26, it could have come as no surprise that Peter was himself elected pope three months later.

Thus from the beginning, music and ceremony functioned to legitimize a council that, from the perspective of legal orthodoxy, could never be legitimate. Given that the plainchant cited in the council acts carried with it a sense of authority by virtue of its inclusion in papal ceremony, might new, polyphonic works have played a similar role at Pisa? Although extant records make no reference to polyphony, a brief consideration of Peter’s biography suggests that he would have been particularly inclined to use music to memorialize the event.

Peter’s success at Pisa marked the zenith of what was, by any measure, a brilliant career. Born on Crete and orphaned at an early age,

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2 For the text of Peter’s sermon, see ibid., vol. 27, 188 ff. Aldo Landi provides a brief description of the sermon in *Il papa deposto. Pisa 1409: L’idea conciliare nel Grande Scisma* (Turin: Claudiana, 1985), 165.

3 Landi, *Il papa deposto*, presents an overview of conciliar theory before and after the Council of Pisa, as well as a detailed account of the council itself.

4 The description of the opening session is similar to the instructions for a general council provided for the papal ceremonial of the 13th and 14th centuries. See, for instance, Avignon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 1706, the contents of which date from the 13th and early 14th centuries. The relevant passages are edited in Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, *Die Zeremonienbücher der Römischen Kurie im Mittelalter* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1973), 156–63.


Peter was rescued from poverty and educated by Italian Franciscans. He received a doctorate from the University of Paris in 1381, taught theology at the University of Pavia, and served as a close adviser to the duke of Milan, Giangaleazzo Visconti. The influence of the powerful duke was instrumental in Peter’s subsequent ascendance, culminating in his elevation to the archbishopric of Milan in 1402, and his appointment by the Roman Pope, Innocent VII, as cardinal and papal legate to Lombardy in 1405. He thus brought a lifetime of diplomatic experience and scholastic learning to the office of the papacy, qualities that could only have strengthened his vociferous defense of the council and its authority.

Like many members of the political and ecclesiastical elite of Northern Italy among whom he had established himself, Peter cultivated a keen appreciation for the complex polyphony of the *ars subtilior*. The details of the musical life of Peter’s household prior to his election to the papacy are unfortunately unknown, although it is entirely possible that, like many of his fellow cardinals, he maintained a private chapel. The most telling indication of the role of music in Peter’s household...
is his close relationship with the *magister capellae* of the cathedral of Milan, Matteo da Perugia.\(^{11}\) The two likely met shortly after Peter was appointed archbishop of Milan in 1402 by the Roman pope Innocent VII; however, the first evidence of a relationship between them comes in 1406 in a request, made by Peter, that the composer retain his salary from the Duomo while serving in the cleric’s household at Pavia. Matteo disappears from documentation until his return to the Duomo in 1414, but we assume that he was a member Peter’s *familia* until the pope’s sudden death in 1410.

The musical fruits of the relationship between the archbishop and composer are found in the manuscript Modena, Biblioteca Estense, α.M.5.24 (commonly known as ModA).\(^{12}\) The inner fascicles of the codex contain mostly secular music and together constitute one of the central sources of the *ars subtilior*. They most likely preserve the repertory of Peter’s household, and perhaps of the Visconti court as well.\(^{13}\) The outer two fascicles, by contrast, are devoted almost solely to the works of Matteo. Evidence suggests that the composer was likely responsible for compiling the outer folios of ModA and combining them with the inner ones during Peter’s brief reign as pope.\(^{14}\)


\(^{13}\) Stone, following Sartori, rejects Strohm’s suggestion that the inner fascicles of ModA are tied to the court of Giangaleazzo Visconti, and argues instead that their compilation was begun after the duke’s death in 1402 and within the archbishop’s circle (see Strohm, “Filippotto da Caserta,” 65 and Stone, “Writing Rhythm,” 64–68 respectively).

Given his patronage of such a composer as Matteo da Perugia, a musical commemoration of Peter’s two-fold achievement of his ascension to the papacy and the presumed ending of the schism would have hardly fallen of deaf ears. Indeed at least two such commemorations appear to have survived: Hubertus de Salinis’s troped *Gloria jubilatio* and Johannes Ciconia’s two-voice Latin song *O Petre, Christe discipule*. While the former work refers only to the end of the schism and makes no mention of Peter, Salinis’s inclusion in a list of papal familiars at Pisa suggests that it might very well have been performed for Peter at his court.\(^{15}\) The latter piece, by contrast, seems to make a veiled allusion to the new pope, setting a three-fold invocation to “Peter, disciple of Christ,” to St. Peter, and finally to Christ. The description of the first Peter as “corpus et mentem candidus” (fair in body and mind) is likely a pun on the cardinal’s origin in Candia, or Crete, suggesting that the first invocation of the text is to Peter of Candia himself.\(^{16}\) The comparison of the cardinal of Milan with St. Peter, the founder of the papacy, further indicates that Ciconia composed the work specifically during Peter’s brief reign as pope, and perhaps for performance at the council itself.\(^{17}\)

But was the new pontiff personally involved in the commission of either work? Evidence that elucidates the relationship between Salinis’ *Gloria* with the Council of Pisa, Peter, or his papacy, is entirely lacking.


\(^{17}\) Another piece to cite Peter’s ascension to the papacy is the two-voice ballata *Dime, Fortuna, poi che tu parlasti*, which alludes to Alexander V’s return of the papacy to Rome, and has been tentatively ascribed to Antonio Zacara da Teramo by Agostino Ziino. There is no evidence, however, that this work was tied to Peter or was performed in his presence. See Agostino Ziino, *Il codice T. III. 2*: Torino, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria: Studio introduttivo ed edizione in facsimile (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1994), 110–11. The author proposes two hypotheses regarding the compilation of the Turin manuscript. First, that it was compiled in northern Italy at a Franciscan house obedient to the papacy of Alexander V or his successor, John XXIII, and, second, that its contents were sung in the chapel of a cardinal active in central or northern Italy during that period, and was compiled for the Council of Constance. For an edition and facsimile of the work in question, see Ziino, *Il Codice T. III. 2*, 105 and 139.
Ciconia’s *O petre*, however, seems to have been composed at the behest of one of Peter’s ecclesiastical colleagues, and was thus likely not a product of his own initiative.\(^\text{18}\) Furthermore, there is little or no indication that either work was performed at the council itself, rather than in the months directly following the event.

For signs of Peter’s own involvement in a work intended for performance at the council, we must turn our attention back to Matteo da Perugia and, in particular, to his three-voice motet, *Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei*, that occupies pride of place on the opening verso and recto of ModA (see Fig. 1). Here the first and second cantus set the same text, *Ave sancta mundi salus*, a poem that extols the Eucharist, while the tenor sets the text of the cantus firmus, the fourth Agnus Dei melody according to the Gregorian classification. That Matteo placed this piece at the beginning of the manuscript suggests that the work had particular significance for himself and for his patron. As we shall see, *Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei*, like its manuscript source, bears witness to Peter’s particular interest in music and the close relationship between Matteo and the Milanese cardinal.

While I am not the first to associate this motet with Peter or the council, scholars have not thoroughly explored the intentions of its author/composer and the web of associations the work engendered.\(^\text{19}\) In what follows, I argue not only that Matteo likely composed the work for performance during the official proceedings of the council, but that Peter played a crucial role in the selection of the motet text, and indeed may have been its author. If this were the case, *Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei* would constitute a rare example of collaboration between patron and musician during this period, an alliance that produced an altogether unique work among the repertory of late medieval motets.

As heard at the council, *Ave sancta mundi* would have served two purposes. First, it constituted a clear, if subtle, articulation of Franciscan piety, one that Peter’s fellow minor friars would have surely understood and interpreted in light of his position as a prominent and influential

\(^\text{18}\) While Di Bacco and Nádas attribute the impetus behind *O petre* to the bishop of Padua, Pietro Marcello, Bent favors the bishop of Vicenza, Pietro Emiliani (see “Verso uno ’stile internazionale’,” 33n63 and “Music and the Early Veneto Humanists,” 114–15 respectively). As Bent observes, that Emiliani owed his position as bishop to Peter makes him a particularly likely candidate. Another source of inspiration might have been Ciconia’s patron Francesco Zabaralla, one of the primary advocates for the conciliar solution to the Great Schism. Zabaraella and the new pope had known each other since Peter’s visit to Venice in 1406 as papal legate (see Thomas E. Morrissey, “Peter of Candia at Padua”).

FIGURE 1. ModA, fols av-1r. Courtesy of the Estense Library
FIGURE 1. (continued)
member of that order. Second, Matteo’s work signified a forceful plea for unity among the church elders gathered at Pisa. It not only displayed Peter’s scholastic training and cultural sophistication, but also provided a statement of Eucharistic orthodoxy that could have only strengthened his position as the newly elected pope.

II

*Ave sancta mundi* is a five-stanza poem in which each stanza consists of two eight-syllable lines followed by one seven-syllable line (see Ex. 1). The metric organization and rhyme scheme of the poem (aax, bbx, ccx, etc . . . ) conforms to the model of the classic Victorine sequence. If the form of *Ave sancta mundi* draws on a long-standing poetic tradition, however, its content is less indebted to earlier works. Compared to the extraordinarily popular and enduring Eucharistic hymns and sequences of the 13th century by such luminaries as Thomas Aquinas and Pope Innocent IV, it seems quite restrained. The poet invokes none of the vivid imagery of the Last Supper or Christ’s Passion, two popular themes in Eucharistic poetry, nor does the text include any of the didacticism common in Aquinas’s works. Instead, the author of *Ave sancta mundi* relates the commonplace notion of the Host as salvation to that of the spiritual journey. He couches salvation in terms of movement from earth to heaven, and the very structure of the poem underscores this movement.

For instance, the first two stanzas begin with “Ave, sancta mundi salus” and end with “Celi pandens Hostia,” with the genitive “mundi” and “celi” emphasizing the dichotomous earth and heaven. The succession of compact phrases, which name and describe the Host, link lines 1 and 6, and in so doing provide a structural analogy to the metaphorical connection between earth and heaven brought about by the Eucharist. The pun in line 6, in which the poet has substituted “hostia” (host) for “ostia” (doors), further emphasizes the Host’s role in providing salvation by suggesting that the Eucharist is literally the “doors of heaven.”

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20 This scheme was one of the most popular poetic types to occur in the liturgical poetry of the high and late Middle Ages. See Andrew Hughes, “Late Medieval Plainchant for the Divine Office,” in *Music as Concept and Practice in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Reinhard Strohm and Bonnie J. Blackburn (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 40.

21 See, for instance, the sequence *Ave verum corpus*, which is traditionally ascribed to Pope Innocent IV (d. 1254). The poem is edited in *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*, (Leipzig: O.R. Reisland, 1896), vol. 54, 257. Thomas Aquinas’s works include the sequence *Laudationem*, and the hymns *Pange lingua*, *Sacer solemnis*, and *Vesum supernum prodiens*, all of which are part of his mass and office for the feast of Corpus Christi. On the attribution of the mass and office to St. Aquinas, see Pierre-Marie Gy, “L’Office du Corpus Christi et S. Thomas D’Aquin,” *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 64 (1980): 491–507. Aquinas’s poems are edited in *Analecta Hymnica*, vol. 50, 583–91.
EXAMPLE 1. Text of *Ave sancta mundi salus*

1. Ave, sancta mundi salus,
2. Panis vivus, immortalis

4. Ave, cibus spiritualis,
5. Cibus bonus et regalis,
6. Celi pandens hostia.

7. Tu es panis angelorum,
8. Factus cibus viatorum,
9. Ducens ad celestia.

10. Tu es panis filiorum,
11. Mundi vita, spes reorum,
12. Donans vera gaudia.

13. Duc nos tecum ad superna,
14. Tu, virtutum o pincerna,
15. Ubi pax et gloria.


Hail, holy salvation of the world, living [and] immortal bread, most holy Host.

Hail, spiritual food, good and regal food, opening the “doors” of heaven.

You are the bread of the angels, you are made the food of travelers leading to the heavens.

You are the bread of the [your] sons, life of the world, the hope of sinners, giving true joys.

Lead us with you to the heavenly heights, dispenser, you of virtues, where be peace and glory.

Amen.
Stanzas 3 and 4 elaborate on these opening six lines, focusing on the various ways in which the Host functions as salvation. Furthermore, they accentuate the distinction between earth and heaven, but in reverse. The rhyming “angelorum” and “filiorum,” occupying identical positions within the verse structure, parallel the framing “mundi” and “celi” in the first two stanzas. The characterization of the Host as something that “leads the way to heaven” (“Ducens ad celestia”) in stanza 3, and that is the “life of the world” (“mundi vita”) in stanza 4, further reinforces this dichotomy.

On a large scale, then, the first four stanzas of Ave sancta mundi involve a movement from the mundane (stanza 1) to the heavenly (stanzas 2 and 3) and back again (stanza 4). Throughout lines 1–12, and particularly lines 2–5, the phrases describing or naming the Host are the primary vehicle through which we achieve this motion, both literally and figuratively. The final stanza makes the role of the Eucharist plain when in line 13, the speaker implores the Host to “lead us with you to the heavenly heights” (“duc nos tecum ad superna”). Here the participial “ducens” of line 9 becomes an imperative “duc nos,” signaling the climax of the poem. For no longer is the speaker content to merely salute and describe the Host; he openly seeks its salvific power. The witty paradox that ends the poem (line 14), in which the poet identifies the bread of Christ with the “pincerna,” or cup bearer, again plays on the identity of the Host. Just as we were asked to consider the Host as doors to heaven (line 6), here the poet compels us to contemplate the Eucharist as the bearer of its counterpart, the blood of Christ.

Ave sancta mundi thus thematizes the role of the Eucharist in the Christian’s journey to enlightenment and salvation. On both a semantic and structural level we witness the Host’s power to link heaven and earth, providing a means for the humble Christian to ascend ad superna, to the heavenly heights. The word most evocative of this ascendance is “viatorum” in line 8, usually translated as “travelers,” “wayfarers,” or “pilgrims,” for it captures perfectly the fluid, transitory nature of man’s circumstances in this context.

Given the importance of the viator in the poem, it is surely significant that it and the surrounding passage constitute a particularly prominent case of borrowing. Here the poet has reworked the 21st stanza of Thomas Aquinas’s sequence for the feast of Corpus Christi, Lauda sion (see Ex. 2). With Ave sancta mundi he modifies the borrowed passage by inserting the phrase “Ducens ad celestia” immediately following “viatorum,” saving “panis filiorum” for the following verse. The proximity of “Ducens ad celestia” to “viatorum” stresses the traveler’s journey from earth to heaven. It shifts the emphasis from the list of

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22 I wish to thank Michael Allen, professor of classics at the University of Chicago, for alerting me to the significance of the pincerna in the dispensing of wine.
equal recipients of the Host in *Lauda sion* (angelorum, viatorum, and filiorum) to the traveler and his voyage. Thus, as with the poem as a whole, the author focuses on the journey from earth to heaven, and the Eucharist functions as the principal *vade mecum* in this progression.

The borrowing from *Lauda sion*, combined with the formal organization of *Ave sancta mundi*, evokes the famous repertoire of rhymed sequences composed at the Parisian abbey of St. Victor during the 12th century. As noted above, the poem employs the typical metrical and stanzaic layout of the classic Victorine sequence. Moreover, *Lauda sion* is itself a contrafactum of one of the most famous of these sequences, *Laudes crucis*, sung for the feast of the Invention and the Exaltation of the Cross. Given 1) these stylistic affinities between *Ave sancta mundi* and the classic Victorine sequence, 2) the poet’s penchant for word play and the complex organizational strategies described above, and 3) the connection to *Laudes crucis* through Aquinas’s contrafactum *Lauda sion*, it seems probable that the poet meant to evoke the venerability of this earlier, Parisian repertoire. As we shall see, it is just this sense of admiration that Matteo’s musical setting seeks to match.

The central premise of *Ave sancta mundi*—that the Eucharist was crucial to the traveler on his pilgrimage—was a common one during the late Middle Ages and gave rise to the widely held conception of the Host as pilgrim’s food, or *viaticum*. We need look no further than

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24 See, for instance, Thomas Aquinas’s explanation of the term “viaticum” in his *Summa Theologica*, Part 3, Question 73, Article V: “It [i.e. the Host] has its third significance with respect to the future, in so far as this sacrament is a prefiguration of the fruit of God, which will be in the promised land. And because of this it is called the *viaticum*, since it provides us with the way of getting there.” (Tertiam significationem habet respectu futuri: inquantum scilicet hoc sacramentum est praefigurativum fruitionis Dei, quae erit in patria. Et secundum hoc dicitu viaticum: quia hoc praebet nobis viam illuc pervenienti [St. Thomas Aquinas, *Opera omnia* (Rome: Ex Typographia Polyglotta, 1882–2000), vol. 12, 142]).
Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae*, where he articulated the common understanding of the *viator* as an analogy for the fallen state of man. In this sense, all Christians were travelers in search of salvation. Aquinas offers a typical description of the traveler, whose dangerous and uncertain journey has the potential to lead to salvation: “And so hope exists neither in the blessed nor in the damned; however, hope can reside in travelers [*viatoribus*], whether in this life or in purgatory, since either way they apprehend happiness as a future possibility.”\(^{25}\) Aquinas later confirms this optimistic view: “The charity of the road can increase. For we are said to be travelers [*viatores*] who tend towards God, who is the ultimate end of our happiness.”\(^ {26}\)

We find a more pessimistic understanding of the *viator* in St. Bonaventure’s theological manual, the *Breviloquium* of ca. 1257. “As grace does not remove the penalty and corruption from flesh, so also the consequences of original sin—concupiscence and bodily weakness—may coexist with healing grace. Concupiscence may gradually decrease, but its roots remain. No traveler [*viator*], then, is completely rid of it, except the most Blessed Virgin, who was relieved by a special favor.”\(^ {27}\)

Whether or not one emphasized the hope associated with the journey of the Christian pilgrim or the imperfection inherent in his character, the undertaking of the *viator*—to attain entrance to heaven and obtain beatitude—was fundamentally precarious, fraught with risks and uncertainties.

The metaphor of the Christian as traveler or pilgrim was not, of course, new to the 13th century: Its roots lay in early Christian works of mysticism, and particularly in St. Augustine’s *Confessions*.\(^ {28}\) If the great theologians Aquinas and Bonaventure offered precise analytical explanations as to the nature of the *viator* and his relationship with the

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\(^ {25}\) “Et ideo neque in beatis neque in damnatis est spes. Sed in viatoribus sive sint in vita ista sive in purgatorio, potest esse spes; quia utroque apprehendunt beatitudinem ut futurum possidle” (Ibid., vol. 8, 136).

\(^ {26}\) “[...] caritas viae potest augeri. Ex hoc enim dicimur esse viatores quod in Deum tendimus, qui est ultimus finis nostrae beatitudinis” (Ibid., vol. 8, 177).


Host, late medieval mystics followed Augustine’s example by vividly dramatizing the role of the Eucharist in the spiritual journey. Guillaume de Deguileville’s popular pilgrimage-narrative of ca. 1330, *Le Pelerinage de la vie humaine*, constitutes a particularly prominent case—here the Host plays a crucial role in preparing the protagonist, the Christian pilgrim, for his travels. The pilgrim’s counselor, Grace, informs him: “This bread [i.e. the Eucharist] is most necessary for the journey you have to make. Before you can come to the place where you will have what you desire, you will go through very difficult straits and you will find poor lodgings, so that you will often be in trouble if you do not carry this bread with you.”

Before departing, the pilgrim gratefully accepts the Host from Moses, who plays the role of bishop.

If the *viator* was taken as a metaphor for the humble Christian who strove to achieve beatitude, it acquired a more specific and personal meaning for the Franciscans. While confirming the general view of the *viator* articulated by Aquinas in his *Summa*, members of the Friars Minor went further in identifying two figures as travelers: Christ and St. Francis. We see this most prominently in the writings of St. Bonaventure, commonly considered the intellectual founder of the Friars minor; however, the use of the term appears in the Franciscan historian Salimbene’s *Chronicle* and the *Minor Life of St. Francis* of Thomas of Celano as well.

Bonaventure describes Christ as a traveler in the *Breviloquium*, where he writes of Christ’s suffering as being “in every part of His body and in every power of the soul, even in the loftier part of reason. While this power, as a spiritual principle united with things above, supremely enjoyed the presence of God, as a principle of nature attached to things below, it supremely suffered: for Christ was both pilgrim and possessor [*viator et comprehensor*].”

We find a similar formulation in Salimbene.
de Adam’s *Chronicle*, where Christ’s human nature is made more explicit: “And [Christ] used the words ‘who is in heaven’ because although he was a man and appeared and spoke on earth, he was at one and the same time a pilgrim and possessor [viator et comprehensor].” In both cases the *viator* is emblematic of Christ’s humanity, while the term *comprehensor* signifies his possession of divine knowledge and the enjoyment of beatitude. As before, the traveler signifies the imperfect, fallen state of man, who lacks true comprehension of God. Implicit here is that, in so far as Christ shared our humanity, he too partook of the spiritual journey.

Bonaventure also describes the common Christian as a *viator* on various occasions, noting his reliance on scripture in the traveler’s journey and, as noted above, the profound consequences of original sin on the traveler. But his association of the term with the founder of the Friars Minor, St. Francis, personalized it in an entirely new way. This association surely arose because the Franciscans tended to see the *viator* as a recipient of charity, a view that had its roots in the Book of Job. The Friars Minor and St. Francis himself were the most famous givers and recipients of charity in the 13th and 14th centuries, although their doctrine of poverty was not without its detractors, within and without the order. Because of his dramatic renunciation of per-

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33 With regard to the traveler’s reliance on scripture, Bonaventure writes: “Rather, [scripture] unfolds, by supernatural inspiration, for the sake of providing man the wayfarer with as much knowledge as he needs to save his soul” (sed potius, cum secundum lumen supernaturale procedat, ad dandam homini viatori notitiam rerum sufficientem, secundum quod expedit ei ad salutem [Bonaventure, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 7, 241]). Translation from The Works of Bonaventure, 3.


sonal possessions and his embrace of a peripatetic lifestyle, however, St. Francis came to be styled as the paradigmatic *viator*, depending on the goodwill of others on his journey in search of enlightenment.

Bonaventure and Thomas of Celano make this explicit in their biographies of their order’s founder. In his *Minor Life of St. Francis*, Bonaventure likens St. Francis both to Christ and to the traveler in his description of Francis’s rejection of his patrimony early in his life: “[Francis] seemed to be beside himself in his fervor, and he was not ashamed to be stripped naked for love of Christ who hung naked for us on the Cross.” Francis leaves town, singing praises to God, “free from all the bonds and earthly desires in his disregard for the world,” when he happens on a band of thieves. Francis is not afraid, however, and continues to praise God, for “he was a pilgrim [*viator*], half-naked and penniless, and he was glad to suffer tribulation, like the apostles.”

By contrast, Thomas characterizes Francis as a traveler in the context of the saint’s fondness for the natural world: “Hurrying to leave this world in as much as it is the place of exile of our pilgrimage, [Francis,] this blessed traveler [*viator*] was yet helped not a little by the things that are in the world.”

In their *vitae* of St. Francis, then, Bonaventure and Thomas of Celano depict the founder of their order as one who becomes a wayfarer or pilgrim in imitating Christ’s humility and poverty. This preoccupation with the humanity of Christ had a profound effect on Franciscan spirituality and on Bonaventure’s writings in particular.

His *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (*The Mind’s Journey to God*), described by one critic as the “*livre d’or* of Franciscan mysticism,” is a case in point.

In the prologue, the author takes Francis’s vision of a seraph crucified atop Mount La Verna as the model for his own spiritual journey: “I saw at once that this vision represented our father’s [i.e. Francis’s] rapture...”

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in contemplation and the road by which this rapture is reached [...] There is no other path but through the burning love of the Crucified.”⁴⁰ In the context of Francis’s own life, the vision marked the point at which he realized that, like Christ, he would die marked with the stigmata.⁴¹ By taking this episode as the touchstone for his mysticism, an episode that itself symbolized St. Francis’s imitation and contemplation of Christ, Bonaventure wedded the Franciscan concern with the *imitatio Christi* to the traditional theme of the spiritual journey.

Taking their cue from St. Bonaventure, then, Franciscans throughout the late Middle Ages surely conceived of themselves as travelers in their imitation of the illustrious *viatores* Christ and St. Francis. For evidence of the continuing preoccupation with the figure of the *viator*, we need look no further than six works of liturgical poetry composed by Peter of Candia for his Franciscan brethren. They are contained in the manuscript Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Plut. 25.9, which was most likely compiled during Peter’s reign as pope. Included here are sequences in honor of the Holy Trinity, a Feast among the Friars Minor, the Benefices of God, the Fast of Lent, and St. Clare, as well as a rhymed office for the Visitation of the Virgin.⁴²

Two of the poems, the Lenten sequence and the rhymed office, make explicit reference to the *viator*. In the 16th stanza of the sequence, the author describes the benefits of the Lenten fast, “[which] the Lord, born of the Virgin, instituted for travelers [*viatoribus*], a promised prize.”⁴³ In the first antiphon for lauds of his rhymed office, Peter observes: “With respect to the viaticum of the Mother, the faithful traveler [*viator*] will discover that the Mother of the Founder fulfilled the ministries of all the spirits.”⁴⁴ In the sequence, the abstinence from food aids the *viator* on his journey, while in the antiphon we see the more

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⁴² That the scribe in question was himself a Franciscan, and refers to Peter as “Fratris Petri de Candia, Ordinis Minorum,” suggests that the sequences, and perhaps the office as well, was meant specifically for the Franciscan order. See P. Willibrordus Lampen, “Prosae seu Poemata Petri de Candia, O.F.M,” *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 23 (1939): 172. Lampen also provides an edition of the sequences. Peter’s office for the Visitation of the Virgin is contained in this same manuscript; however, unlike the sequences, the office was widely disseminated throughout the 15th century, particularly in Franciscan liturgical manuscripts. See *Analecta Hymnica*, vol. 24, 98–102.

⁴³ “Haec Virgis Natus et Dominus / Instituit pro viatoribus, / Promisso bravio” (Lampen, “Prosae seu Poemata,” 180).

⁴⁴ “Circa matris viaticum / Reperiet modestia / Devoti viatoris, / Quod omnium spirituum / Complevit ministeria / Genitrix conditoris” (*Analecta Hymnica*, vol. 24, 100).
usual association of the pilgrim’s food, the viaticum, with the traveler. In the latter case, however, Peter associates the viaticum with the Virgin and the traveler’s quest with the desire to gain divine knowledge of her rather than of Christ.

The inclusion of the term viator in both the sequence and rhymed office without doubt served as a charged metaphor for Peter’s Franciscan readers. Might its appearance in Ave sancta mundi—a work preoccupied, as we have seen, with the Eucharist as a means of ascendance to heaven—have spoken just as clearly to members of the Friars Minor? Furthermore, who would have been better placed than Peter of Candia to translate a deep understanding of Franciscan spirituality into the motet text? Finally, the form of Ave sancta mundi and the literary strategies I have noted all point to an author intent on encoding meaning through symbolism, allusion, and wordplay. Not only are these strategies characteristic of the very repertoire of Victorine sequences that the poem evokes—a repertoire that Peter would surely have encountered during his study at the University of Paris—but they are more broadly indicative of an extensive scholastic education.

My examination of Ave sancta mundi, the writings of St. Bonaventure and his fellow Franciscans, and the liturgical poetry of Peter of Candia, suggest therefore that the cardinal of Milan might very well have been the author of the poem in question. And yet we hardly need to accept Peter’s authorship in order to posit a relationship between his patronage of Matteo and the selection of this particular text for the prospective motet. For who would have appreciated the resonances of the poem with the self-conception of the Friars minor more than the new Franciscan pope who had himself composed liturgical poetry intended for his order?

III

If Peter indeed presented Matteo da Perugia with this finished poem, how did the latter set such a text? Given the composer’s fluency in both the ars subtilior and late Trecento styles, it is hardly surprising that his setting draws on French and Italian motet traditions. From a

45 As Lampen notes, given that the sequences did not circulate in liturgical manuscripts, it is likely that they were meant to be read rather than actually sung (Lampen, “Prosae seu Poemata,” 172).

46 On the essential characteristics of the Trecento motet, see Margaret Bent, “The Fourteenth-Century Italian Motet,” in L’Ars Nova italiana del Trecento, ed. Giulio Cattin (Certaldo: Polis, 1992), 85–125. For a more recent discussion of the various motet sub-genres that were disseminated in northern and central Italy during this period, see Julie E. Cumming, The Motet in the Age of Du Fay (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 65–98.
Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei borrows the chief stylistic features of the traditional French isorhythmic motet: the use of a cantus firmus, imperfect time and minor prolation, and panisorhythm. The isorhythmic plan of Ave sancta mundi is determined in large part by the ternary structure of the cantus firmus (see Table 1).

Here the tenor melody is repeated twice, once in diminution by half and once again in diminution by one fourth, thereby producing three total statements of color and talea. The instructions that the tenor perform the melody according to the “secundo modo” or the second rhythmic mode of the ars antiqua override the conventions of mensural notation. Matteo divides the upper voices into four statements of talea, the last of which is diminished by one-half. A tripartite structure results, in which the first unit is further subdivided by the two statements of talea in the first and second cantus.

If the form of Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei is French, the musical surface resembles the typical Italian motet of the Trecento (see Ex. 3). Not only do the upper two voices of the three-voice piece set a single Latin text, they form a duet and occupy the same range. Brief points of rhythmic imitation and hocket, stylistic traits typical of the caccia, but also common in Italian motets, pervade the work. Moreover, they result in a transparent musical texture, one in which the text is readily understood. Matteo goes to some lengths to assure this: Often one cantus part is singing the same word as the other, and one voice rarely begins a new line of poetry before the other has finished singing the previous line. Clearly, the composer wanted the poem understood on first hearing.

Matteo exhibits a sensitivity to the motet text that goes beyond the desire that it be comprehensible. For instance, the motet structure reinforces the dichotomy between heaven and earth effected by the poet: The second isorhythmic statement of the upper voices (m. 25) begins with “Celi” of line 6, while the third statement (m. 49) begins with “Mundi” of line 11. Furthermore, this third isorhythmic statement, which roughly falls at the midpoint of the piece, is directly preceded by a cadence on A (mm. 45–46), an anomalous event in a work with a strong G tonal center. That this cadence sets the word “panis” in both of the upper voices is surely no coincidence, and suggests that the composer wished to highlight the subject of the poem, the Eucharist.47

More prominent still is the brief tonal excursus with which Matteo sets the word “viatorum” in mm. 36–37. At most points where the cantus firmus descends from A to G, the upper voices expand outwards from a major third and sixth to a fifth and octave, forming a cadence

47 I thank Margaret Bent for calling this to my attention.
TABLE 1

Isorhythmic Scheme of *Ave sancta mundi / T. Agnus Dei.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cantus 1 / Cantus 2:</th>
<th>Agnus 1</th>
<th>Agnus 2</th>
<th>Agnus 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>T2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenor:</td>
<td>t1/c</td>
<td>t2/c</td>
<td>t3/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length:</td>
<td>48 Breves</td>
<td>24 Breves</td>
<td>12 Breves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportions:</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 “T” refers to statements of talea, “C” to statements of color. Capital letters are used for the cantus 1 and cantus 2, while lower case letters are used for the tenor. Numbers in the fourth row designate statements of talea which contain different rhythmic values, but which are nevertheless proportionally related. Thus T2 is proportionally related to T1 by $\frac{1}{2}$ (as is t2 to t1), and t3 to t1 by $\frac{1}{4}$.

On G.48 In mm. 36-37, however, Matteo sets a C-natural in the first cantus, which falls to an unexpected B♭. This is the only B♭ in a work characterized by the *musica ficta* of F♯ and C♯, inflections which typically participate in cadences on the G final. The second cantus’s repetition of “viatorum” (mm. 37-38) returns to this familiar tonal space, but it also creates yet another disjunction between the B♭ and F♯ in m. 37. Given the imitative text setting of the motet, the contrast between the first and second statements of “viatorum” is particularly prominent. The harmonic surprise of mm. 36-39 thus inflects the text in such a way that the most important figure of the poem, the *viator*, could have hardly gone unnoticed.

Matteo’s setting must have significantly furthered Peter’s intent when viewed from a broader perspective as well. As we have seen above, *Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei* constitutes a hybrid motet, displaying features of both the Italian and French tradition. But its hybridity is evident not only on the level of subgenre, but that of genre as well.49 While scholars have generally considered the piece in question an isorhythmic motet, two features suggest that it also served as a substitute

48 See, for instance, mm. 9–10.
Example 3. Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei. After PFMC, 13, pp. 206–8

Matheus de Perusio
EXAMPLE 3. (continued)

\(\text{Ce\_li\_pa\_ndens\ ho\_sti\_a.}\quad \text{Tu\_es\_pa\_n\_nis\ an\_ge\_li\_pa\_ndens\ ho\_sti\_a.}\quad \text{Tu\_es\_pa\_n\_nis\ an\_ge\_lo\_rum\ Fa\_ctus\ ci\_bus\ vi\_a\_to\_rum,}\)

\(\text{-\_se\_re\_-}\)

\(\text{Du\_cens\ ad\ ce\_le\_sti\_-a.}\quad \text{Tu\_es\_pa\_n\_nis\ fi\_li\_-o\_rum,}\quad \text{Mun\_di\ vi\_ta,}\quad \text{spes\_-}\)

\(\text{B\ dim.}\quad \text{-\_bis.}\quad \text{A\_-\_gnus}\_-\)
EXAMPLE 3. (continued)

Dei, qui tollis pec

Te-cum ad su-per-na,

Duc nos te-cum ad su-per-na, Tu, vir-tu-tum o pin-cer-

Tu, vir-tu-tum o pin-cer-na, Ub-i pax et glo-

U-bi pax et glo-

Se-re-re no-

IV dim.

Agnes Dei, qui tol-
for the Agnus Dei. First, the isorhythmic structure of Ave sancta mundi disposes the tenor into precisely three statements, thereby accommodating the traditional threefold declamation of the Agnus chant. Second, unlike most 14th-century motets, the tenor of Ave sancta mundi is underlaid with the entire text of the cantus firmus, indicating that Matteo intended the chant text to be sung completely (see Fig. 1). Furthermore, the text of the Agnus Dei takes on a heightened prominence in measures 73–84, where the upper voices simply vocalize on the “A” of “Amen,” thereby allowing the third petition “dona nobis pacem” to cut through the polyphonic texture.

It seems likely that Matteo was consciously blurring the distinction between motet and mass movement. The obscuring of generic distinctions was relatively common in the decades around 1400; however, it

50 Ursula Günther’s decision not to include Ave sancta mundi in her edition of motets from the Chantilly Codex and ModA constitutes an important exception to the tendency to view the work as a motet. See Ursula Günther, The Motets of the Manuscripts Chantilly, Musée Condé, 564 (olim 1047) and Modena, Biblioteca Estense, α. M. 5, 24 (olim lat. 568) (American Institute of Musicology, 1965).

51 This is in marked contrast to the bipartite structure of many Italian motets. These works, while not properly isorhythmic, employed the “double-statement rhythmic structure,” where the second half of the work duplicates the rhythm content of the first (see Cumming, The Motet in the Age of Du Fay, 79).
usually involved the importation of chanson and motet styles into the genre of the mass. A prime example of this is Matteo’s Gloria for four voices, also preserved in the first fascicle of ModA. In this case, Matteo not only uses a “foreign” cantus firmus, again an Agnus Dei melody, but he also employs isorhythmic techniques similar to those found in Ave sancta mundi. Both strategies were associated with the isorhythmic motet of the period rather than with settings of the mass ordinary.

With Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei, Matteo thus crafted a work that displays features of both a motet and mass, features that he explored in his isorhythmic Gloria setting as well. This allowed him to draw upon the theological and ritual associations of the Agnus Dei chant and the mass as a whole, while at the same time invoking the venerability of the isorhythmic motet. When viewed from the perspective of its supposed liturgical context, Ave sancta mundi offered a pointed embellishment to the ritual of the mass. While the Agnus Dei was originally conceived as an accompaniment to the Fraction rite, in the Middle Ages it became associated with the priest’s communion. By the 14th and 15th centuries the Agnus Dei had come to signify a powerful expression of Eucharistic devotion in and of itself, and in this sense resembled the hymns Ave verum corpus and O salutaris hostia, which were typically sung during the Elevation of the Host.

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52 Strohm, *The Rise of European Music*, 23–24 and 42–43. Of course, such distinctions were not as rigid in the early 15th century as they may seem today. Cumming has argued that the term “motet” carried two meanings for much of the 15th century. She writes, “[a]rchival references suggest that ‘motet’ can mean simply ‘polyphony’ in some contexts, but it also has a more specific meaning: a genre without a prescribed liturgical function [such as the polyphonic mass] that was used to adorn devotions” (Cumming, *The Motet in the Age of Du Fay*, 60). Andrew Kirkman has recently voiced skepticism that the term “motet” carried such a specific meaning during the early 15th century (“The Invention of the Cyclic Mass,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54 [2001]: 4–16, esp. 10–12).


54 Like Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei, the isorhythmic schema extends to the two cantus parts, although the contratenor is not strictly isorhythmic. The second statement of color in the tenor and contratenor is diminished by one-half, while the cantus parts proceed at their original value (mm. 61 ff.). Again, like Matteo’s motet, the tenor of the Gloria carries the entire Agnus Dei text. For more information on the structure of the piece, see ibid., 271.


56 Jungmann writes: “The Lamb of God patently does not refer to Christ simply, but rather to Christ present in the Eucharist as a sacrificial offering; in the same way, just before the distribution of Communion, when the priest holds the Sacrament upraised before the faithful with the words, Ecce Agnus Dei, it is the sacramental Christ who is meant” (*The Mass of the Roman Rite*, 335).
The poem *Ave sancta mundi* amplifies the Eucharistic associations of the Agnus Dei. While the tenor indirectly refers to the Host in its petition to the “Lamb of God,” the motet text functions in a trope-like fashion, explicitly naming the Host and hailing its power to aid in the search for salvation.\(^5^7\) This statement of sacramental devotion also comes at a critical point in the mass itself. Positioned soon after the moment of consecration and during the priest’s communion, *Ave sancta mundi* added to the multitude of adornments—the pealing of bells, incense, candles, and supplications—that characterized the Elevation during this period.\(^5^8\)

As an Agnus Dei substitute, *Ave sancta mundi* would have augmented the Eucharistic associations of its ritual context and added to the already ornate ritual that surrounded the elevation and the communion of the celebrant. In its capacity as an isorhythmic motet, however, the work drew upon the tradition of authority, ceremony, and intellectualism associated with the genre. Johannes de Grocheio, in his *De musica* of ca. 1300, provides us with one of the earliest expressions of this attitude. He famously writes that the motet “should not be set before a lay public because they are not alert to its refinement nor are they delighted by hearing it, but [it should only be performed] before the clergy and those who look for the refinements of skills.”\(^5^9\)

The isorhythmic motets of Phillipe de Vitry, Guillaume de Machaut, and their contemporaries reinforce the impression that the genre functioned primarily as a medium through which ecclesiastics and educated lay people contemplated political, moral, or theological issues.\(^6^0\)

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\(^5^7\) In this respect, Matteo’s troped *Gloria Spiritus et alme*, which directly precedes his isorhythmic *Gloria* in ModA, constitutes another point of comparison with *Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei*. For an edition, see Fischer and Gallo, eds., *Italian Sacred Music*, 85–89.

\(^5^8\) On the ritual of the elevation and its effect on the laity, see Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 58.


\(^6^0\) Edward Roesner has noted the marked shift in tone of the *ars nova* motets preserved in the *Roman de Fauvel*, which take on “contemporary ‘political’ themes.” He identifies nine “political” motets in the *Roman*, of which at least one, and perhaps as many as four, were composed by Philippe de Vitry. See Edward H. Roesner, François Avril, and Nancy Freeman Regalado, eds., *Le Roman de Fauvel: In the Edition of Mesire Chaillou de Pesstain* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1990), 24. A particularly ambitious case involves Guillaume de Machaut’s 17 early motets, which, as Anne Robertson has convincingly demonstrated, formed a large-scale meditation on the spiritual journey. While they did not engage current events, they were, first and foremost, objects of contemplation that were designed to engage the intellectual and spiritual issues of the day. See her *Guillaume de Machaut and Reims: Context and Meaning in his Musical Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002).
intellectual nature of the motet went hand in hand with its rise as a ceremonial or dedicatory genre, one that was particularly well suited for the papacy. As Margaret Bent has recently shown, the papal motet—motets composed for, and often at the behest of the popes—constituted a small yet distinctive repertory. One thinks of Phillipe de Vitry’s Petre clemens, composed in honor of Clement VI in 1342, or of the anonymous Pictagore per dogmata, written around 1375 in honor of Pope Gregory XI. Both works relied on a myriad of literary and theological allusions to convey doctrinal messages. While these works were written with a variety of purposes in mind, they were a primary vehicle by which the papacy reinforced its authority within the rarified circles of the papal court.

By the first decade of the 15th century, the tradition of the papal motet was well established. The customary use of isorhythm and different texts in the voice parts, by this time decidedly old-fashioned techniques, gave these works an air of venerability that echoed the papacy itself. Indeed, Matteo seems to have reinforced the traditional quality of Ave sancta mundi through his use of pan-isorhythm and his invocation of the second rhythmic mode. In this respect he accentuated the already antiquated character of the genre, making it the perfect vehicle for papal veneration—matching Peter’s evocation of the classic Victorine sequence.

Nevertheless, if Ave sancta mundi was a papal motet, it was certainly a peculiar one. Unlike most ceremonial works of the period, the piece sets a devotional rather than laudatory text. Indeed, an isorhythmic motet that set a Eucharistic poem was virtually unheard of, and in this

61 Bent, “Early Papal Motets.”
62 According to Andrew Wathey, Petre clemens was not only a celebratory work, but had a more specific, doctrinal purpose: to assert the “independence of the papacy from the bishopric of Rome, and the universal rather than local character of papal power” (“The Motets of Phillipe de Vitry and the Fourteenth-Century Renaissance,” Early Music History 12 [1993]: 135). Ursula Günther provides a careful reading of the anonymous Pictagore per dogmata. The work urges Gregory XI to return to Rome, while at the same time drawing imagery from medieval heraldry and Virgil’s Aeneid to celebrate the pope and his family. See Ursula Günther, The Motets, XL–XLII. Andrew Tomasello, while offering several revisions, essentially confirms Günther’s analysis (Music and Ritual, 26–30).
63 The devotional or liturgical significance of most 14th- and early 15th-century motets, whether associated with the papacy or not, is obscure or nonexistent. As Margaret Bent has observed, “it would be a mistake to regard the motet, the Italian no more than the French, as primarily sacred, let alone liturgical. Even the pieces that might appear to be liturgical (because honoring a saint) could have been intended for secular ceremonial use” (Bent, “The Fourteenth-Century Italian Motet,” 105–6). For other discussions of the Italian motet texts of the period, see Julie E. Cumming, “Concord out of Discord: Occasional Motets of the Early Quattrocento” (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1987), 107, and John Michael Alsen, “Style and Intertextuality in the Isorhythmic Motet, 1400–1440” (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison, 1992), 123.
respect Matteo’s work is almost without precedent.\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ave sancta mundi} thus displays features of a variety of genres and subgenres, resisting attempts at fast and easy classification. This is surely symptomatic of the limitations of our own generic distinctions with regard to the music of the period; however, it is also, I would argue, a product of the immediate historical context within which Matteo was working.\textsuperscript{65} To ascertain why the composer set the poem \textit{Ave sancta mundi} in the manner of an isorhythmic motet, a genre typically reserved for celebratory texts, we must return to the probable impetus for the composition of the work: the ascension of Peter of Candia to the papacy at the Council of Pisa.

IV

An examination of the possible contexts for \textit{Ave sancta mundi} / \textit{Agnus Dei} at the council is necessarily speculative. The council acts do not mention polyphony at all, and their descriptions of liturgy and ritual in general are woefully brief.\textsuperscript{66} To compound the uncertainty, the work in question resists assignment to any given occasion by virtue of its devotional text and potential use as a substitute for a mass ordinary movement. The motet would have been appropriate for any number of occasions and was surely performed multiple times.\textsuperscript{67}

Despite these problems, evidence culled from the acts suggests that \textit{Ave sancta mundi} / \textit{Agnus Dei} would have been particularly suitable for performance at several key points during the course of the proceedings. The Council of Pisa took place over roughly four and a half months, from 25 March to 7 August (see Table 2). During the first 14 sessions the council members worked at formulating a series of accusations against Benedict XIII and Gregory XII, which served to justify

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ave Jesu Christe} and \textit{Ave vivens hostia}, both of which are anonymous Italian isorhythmic motets and date from the 14th century, constitute the only precursors to \textit{Ave sancta mundi} of which I am aware (see Fischer and Gallo, eds., \textit{Italian Sacred Music}, 118 and 23).

\textsuperscript{65} On the limitations of such generic distinctions with regard to the motet of the late 14th and early 15th centuries, see Margaret Bent, “The Late-Medieval Motet,” in \textit{Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Music}, ed. Tess Knighton and David Fallows (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 118.


\textsuperscript{67} As Maiani has noted, the Agnus Dei melody used as the tenor (melody IV in the \textit{Liber usualis}, or 136 according Schildbach’s classification) was one of a number of options deemed appropriate for duplex feasts (“Notes on Matteo da Perugia,” 15). My survey of late medieval manuscripts of central-Italian provenance for the melody in question confirms this. For a list of these and other sources, see Martin Schildbach, \textit{Das Einstimmige Agnus Dei und seine handschriftliche Überlieferung vom 10. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert} (Erlangen: Offsetdruck-Fotodruck J. Hogl, 1967), 117–19.
the deposition of these French and Italian popes on June 5. Peter’s election followed three weeks later on June 26, although he was not crowned until July 7, after which the council proceeded under the new pope’s supervision for yet another month.

Although the text of *Ave sancta mundi* makes no explicit reference to the council, the Eucharistic poem resonated immensely with the surrounding events, for the climax of the proceedings—the dramatic deposing of popes Benedict and Gregory—occurred on the vigil of the feast of Corpus Christi. On the following day, the Augustinian friar Ludolf of Sagan delivered a sermon to the council members in which he tied the restored unity of the church to the sacramental host. Here he argued for a united church under one bread and one wine—the body and blood of Christ—accompanying this plea for unity with a forceful defense of the doctrine of transubstantiation and of the authority of the clergy to dispense the Host. As a statement of Eucharistic piety, *Ave sancta mundi* was an ideal musical counterpart to Ludolf’s sermon, reminding the assembly of clerics of their common dependence on the Host for salvation. More importantly, it reinforced the connection that Ludolf had drawn between the Eucharist and a unified church, a connection already implied by the fact that the council had deposed Gregory XII and Benedict XIII on the day before Corpus Christi.

The feast of Corpus Christi left a powerful impression on the council proceedings that went beyond the two days of June 5 and 6: the masses that preceded the following two sessions on June 10 and 12 were both in honor of that feast as well, since they fell within its octave. The festivities of Corpus Christi, which manifested themselves not only in official ceremonies of the council but also in civic traditions of the city of Pisa, thus marked the entire time from the council’s deposition of the rival popes to the opening of the conclave on June 14. That devotion to the body of Christ filled the temporal gap between the dethroning of the putative heads of the Church and the convening of the cardinals to choose a new pope was certainly appropriate, for, according to Ludolf, it was through meditation on the Eucharist that the church was to be brought together under one, legitimate pontiff.

If *Ave sancta mundi* was particularly appropriate for performance at the council during the time of the French and Italian popes’s depositions

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68 On these accusations, see Landi, *Il papa deposto*, 186–90.

69 Ibid., 193

70 The Eucharist was widely perceived as a symbol of a unified social body in the late Middle Ages, as well as a mechanism by which clerical authority was exercised. See Mervyn James’s seminal article “Ritual, Drama, and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town,” *Past & Present* 98 (1983): 3–29. For a rethinking of James’s argument, see Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*, 205–71.
TABLE 2
Timeline for the Council of Pisa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, March 25</td>
<td>Inaugural ceremony. Solemn procession from San Michele in Borgo to Pisa Cathedral, where mass is celebrated in honor of the Annunciation of the BMV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 26</td>
<td>First session. A mass is celebrated in honor of the Holy Spirit. Peter of Candia delivers the opening sermon in support of the council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, March 27–</td>
<td>Second-14th sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, May 30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 5</td>
<td>15th session. Depositions of Benedict XIII and Gregory XII. A mass is celebrated de angelis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, June 6</td>
<td>Feast of Corpus Christi. Ludolf of Sagan delivers his sermon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, June 10</td>
<td>16th session. A mass is celebrated for the octave of Corpus Christi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 12</td>
<td>17th session. A mass is celebrated for the octave of Corpus Christi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, June 14</td>
<td>Solemn procession from San Michele in Borgo to Pisa Cathedral, where a mass is celebrated in anticipation of the papal election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, June 15</td>
<td>18th session. A mass is celebrated in honor of the Holy Spirit, after which the cardinals entered into the conclave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 26</td>
<td>Peter of Candia is elected as pope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, July 1</td>
<td>19th session. Peter presides as the new pope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, July 7</td>
<td>Coronation of Peter as Alexander V. Mass is celebrated in the cathedral, and the gospel is read in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, July 10</td>
<td>20th session, with a mass in honor of the Holy Ghost. Florence and Siena publicly recognize Alexander V as pope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, July 21</td>
<td>The University of Paris issues a statement in support of Alexander V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, July 27</td>
<td>21st session, with a mass in honor of the BMV. Louis of Anjou is in attendance and receives the papal investiture for the Kingdom of Naples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, August 7</td>
<td>22nd and final session, with a mass in honor of the Holy Spirit.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
or directly afterwards, identifying a specific occasion is more difficult. Two assumptions reasonably guide our situating *Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei* within this context. First, Peter would probably not have asked Matteo da Perugia to set the poem if his election were not already assured. It seems highly unlikely that Peter wanted the work to be performed before his coronation on July 7, for in this context it could very well have been perceived as a gesture of self-aggrandizement detracting from the council proceedings. Second, Matteo would presumably have needed a reasonable amount of time to compose the motet. These assumptions rule out the feast of Corpus Christi or any of the sessions before Peter’s coronation.

The coronation ceremony, which took place at approximately the hour of Terce on July 7, is itself a likely candidate. While the acts make no mention of music, they do emphasize the solemnity of the event, which included celebration of mass. In this context, the motet would have functioned not as an official celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi, but rather as a commemoration of Peter’s unification of the church under his new papacy. With the sermon of the Augustinian friar still fresh in their minds, the council participants would have easily drawn the connection between the expression of Eucharistic piety and the new pope’s ascension.

Arguing against the performance of *Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei* at Peter’s coronation would be the second assumption stated above, that Matteo needed ample time to compose the work. This turns our attention to the council sessions that followed the coronation, those on July 10, July 27, and August 7. Of these, the 21st (July 27) constitutes a particularly appealing candidate. This mass was one of the few celebrated in honor of the Virgin and the only Mary mass performed after the deposition of the popes. At first glance, a Eucharistic motet would

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71 Of course, this assumes that Matteo composed his musical setting with the Council of Pisa in mind, an assumption that is strengthened if Brad Maiani is right in suggesting that *Ave sancta mundi* constituted a reworking of Matteo’s Lawrence motet *Laurea martirii / Conlaudanda est*. Maiani goes further in suggesting that both motets were performed on the feast of St. Laurence on August 10. See Maiani, “Notes on Matteo da Perugia,” 15–17.


73 According to Vincke, Mary masses preceded a total of four council sessions. These fell on April 15, May 4, May 25, and July 27. A single manuscript source, edited by Mansi, indicates that the July 10 mass was also celebrated in honor of the Virgin rather
seem to be at odds with the Marian character of the ceremony. Recall, however, that Peter cited the *viator* in his rhymed office for the virgin, where he described the Host as “the mother’s *viaticum.*” This Marian connection is strengthened when we consider that the beginning of the motet text, *Ave sancta mundi,* is evocative not only of the Eucharistic hymn *Ave verum corpus,* but of *Ave maria gratia plena* as well. Both of these features make the performance of *Ave sancta mundi* at the mass of the virgin more plausible.

The immediate political context surrounding the 21st session strengthens the case. More than any other moment during the Council of Pisa, it signaled the unprecedented hope and promise of Peter’s fledgling papacy. Seventeen days earlier, the cities of Florence and Siena made their recognition of Peter’s legitimacy public. A strong statement of support on the part of the University of Paris followed on July 21.74 Most significant was the attendance on July 27 of Louis II of Anjou, the claimant to the kingdom of Naples. Given that Alexander was keen for support from the French crown, and that Louis’s long time adversary, King Ladislas, was an outspoken advocate of his rival, Gregory XII, it was natural that the new pope should take the opportunity to recognize Louis’s claim to the Neapolitan throne. Alexander was so keen to have the French noble by his side that he postponed the session, originally scheduled for July 15, for almost two weeks in anticipation of Louis’s arrival.75 Thus, in the span of less than two weeks, Peter had secured the allegiance of Pisa’s powerful neighbors, Florence and Siena, garnered the approval of the University of Paris, and cemented an alliance between himself and an influential member of the French royal family.

The *missa de beata virgine* on July 27 was surely intended to render thanks to Mary as an intercessor.76 The gesture of thanksgiving was

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75 See ibid., 208 and Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum,* vol. 26, 1234.
76 Votive masses in honor of the virgin typically played this role, while those in honor of Christ were normally celebrated in expectation of a particular request or plea. I thank Craig Wright for bringing this point to my attention.
clearly an appropriate occasion for polyphonic embellishment, and in this context *Ave sancta mundi* would have fulfilled several *desiderata*. As a papal motet, *Ave sancta mundi* would have resonated with Peter’s own biography and position, articulating Eucharistic theology in a way that his Franciscan brethren would have understood and appreciated. The new pope was, of course, one of the most prominent Franciscan figures of his time, and Peter’s Franciscan upbringing and education were pivotal to his later successes. The Friars minor saved him from the hardships of poverty and gave him the necessary tools to build an illustrious career as a theologian and diplomat. Peter’s rags-to-riches story makes him the paradigmatic *viator* himself, and the Franciscan order served as a steadfast ally in this ascent. Peter’s actions during his brief papacy, including the issuance of the bull that furthered the Friar’s authority at the expense of the secular clergy, demonstrated his continuing loyalties to his order.\(^\text{77}\)

If Peter was indeed the author of *Ave sancta mundi*, he was not simply casting a glance back at his Franciscan roots but also demonstrating his own erudition as poet and scholar. The poem, couched in the style of the venerable sequence repertoire of St. Victor, found a worthy match in Matteo’s musical setting, which drew upon the solemn associations of the isorhythmic motet. In this way, *Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei* was an act of self-representation, but unlike most papal motets it was a particularly modest one. Peter’s apparent humility must have contrasted sharply with the intransigent papal egos that had dominated the previous 20 years. By couching his message in terms of Franciscan spirituality, then, Peter displayed himself to the council members and to the illustrious Louis of Anjou as a poet, scholar, and, most importantly, as a humble friar.

Still, the work surely held a broader significance for those who participated at the Council of Pisa, and it is in this respect that a second and parallel motive appears. As an Agnus Dei substitute, the motet embellished the canonical liturgy in a way that any educated Christian could appreciate. The political overtones of the work could hardly have been lost on the listeners. Faced with the task of reuniting the whole of Western Christendom, Peter needed vehicles for his message of reconciliation. As noted above, such a statement of Eucharistic piety as *Ave*

\(^{77}\) The bull *Regnans in Excelsis* was the latest salvo in the Franciscans’s long-standing conflict with the secular clergy, reinforcing the friars’s claims of authority over the laity and giving them the right to hear confessions. See Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order*, 389; for a discussion of the friars’s conflict with secular clergy in the 14th and 15th centuries, see 339–49. On Alexander V’s close relationship with the Franciscans, see M. Creighton, *A History of the Papacy from the Great Schism to the Sack of Rome* (London: Longmans, Green, 1897), 263–65.
The foregoing discussion regarding possible contexts for Matteo’s motet has been necessarily speculative. Yet we need not assume that Peter wrote the poem during the Council of Pisa, or that Matteo composed his setting in anticipation of Peter’s ascension to the papacy. The simple decision on Peter’s part to have Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei performed at the council would have brought into play the range of associations outlined here. The mass that opened the penultimate session of the council on July 27 offers a particularly appealing occasion. The conclusion of Peter’s coronation several weeks earlier, his newfound support from Pisa’s neighbors and his alma mater, the University of Paris, and the attendance of Louis of Anjou, all suggest that Peter was, at this moment, at the height of his powers. This mass, sung in honor of the Virgin Mary, herself a powerful metaphor of a unified ecclesia, surely signaled that a single pope once again presided over a united church.

If Peter’s efforts to end the schism were ultimately unsuccessful—he died one year later in Bologna under mysterious circumstances—the aspirations of his papacy were finally realized in 1417 at the Council of Constance, where the Great Schism was brought to a decisive close. It is within the context of Peter’s aspirations and personal devotion that we ought to understand the motet in question. With this examination of that context I have endeavored to show that composers and poets employed a variety of strategies in encoding meaning into music and text. While the author of Ave sancta mundi—perhaps the new pope himself—echoed the Eucharistic theology of the Franciscan order in his poem, Matteo crafted a musical setting that drew on various generic associations that would speak equally well to a variety of listeners. Together, this poet and composer designed a work that reflected at once the pope and his biography, and at the same time the concerns of a church fractured by a devastating, 20-year-old schism.

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ABSTRACT

Fifteenth-century Italy witnessed the marked expansion of the patron’s role in the composition and performance of music. Despite the concern and resources that Renaissance princes and ecclesiastics devoted to their musical institutions, however, instances of actual collaboration between patrons and composers are quite rare. This essay considers
just such an instance, Matteo da Perugia’s *Ave sancta mundi / Agnus Dei.* A careful examination of this early 15th-century Eucharistic motet reveals that the composer’s patron, the cardinal and friar Peter of Candia, likely played a crucial role in selecting the motet text, and was very possibly its author. Read within the context of the enduring and influential works of St. Bonaventure and other Franciscan luminaries, *Ave sancta mundi* appears to be not simply a general statement of Eucharistic theology, but rather an articulation of Franciscan piety. The most likely impetus for such an articulation was Peter’s election to the papacy in 1409 at the Council of Pisa. As heard at the council, not only would the motet have alluded to Peter’s status as a prominent member of the Friars Minor, it would have functioned as a forceful plea for ecclesiastical unity in the face of the Great Schism. Matteo’s setting employs several musical strategies, including genre blending and chromaticism, which inflect Peter’s text in such a way as to amplify these associations. Through a variety of literary allusions and musical processes, then, patron and composer joined in the creative process, fashioning a work that spoke to Peter’s deeply held Franciscan beliefs and the aspirations of his fledgling papacy.