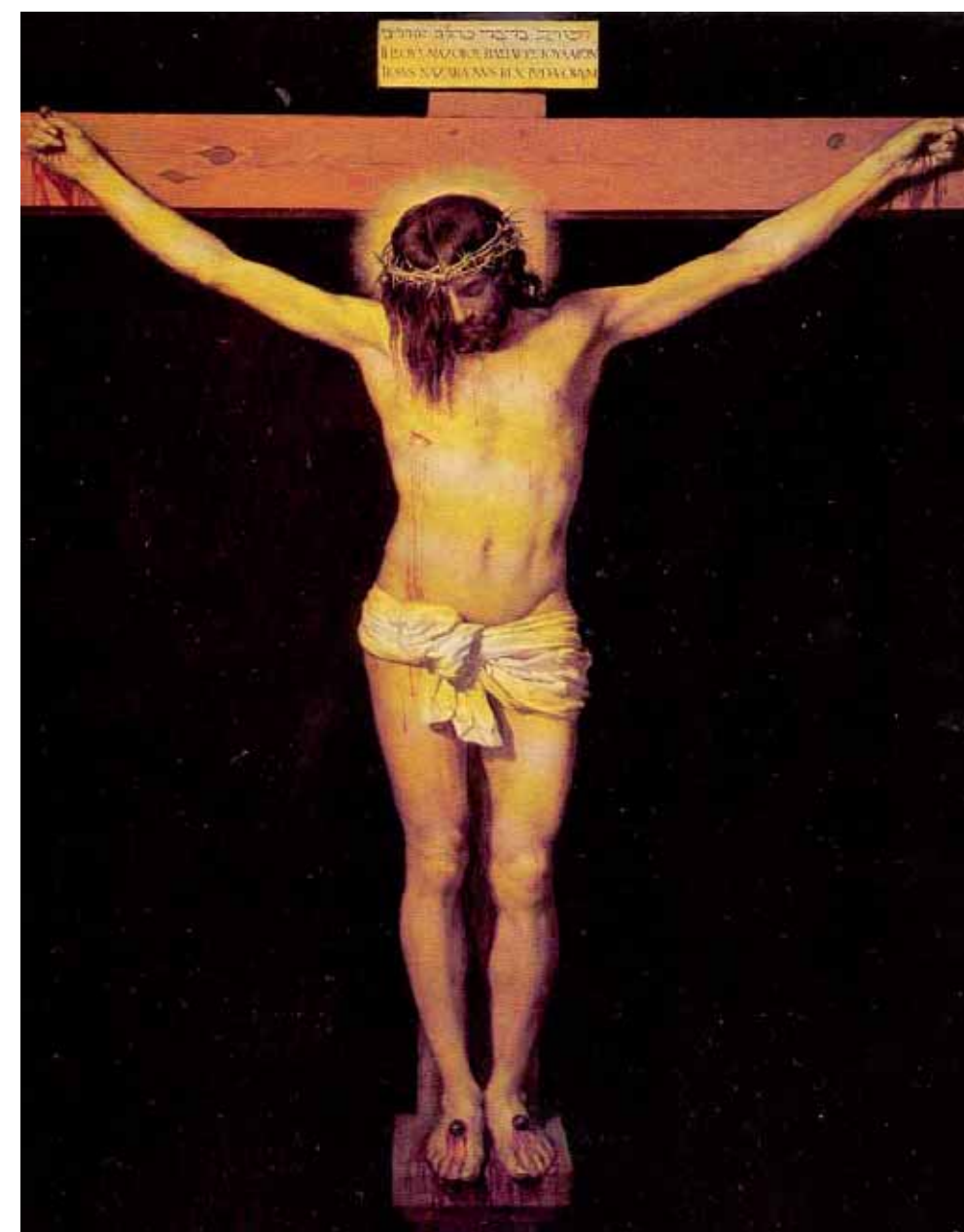


Cornelia Lampognana

PURGATORY

Cornelia Lampognana was a woman living in Milan who, at first as wife and later as widow, dedicated herself to a life of prayer. She was a friend of a religious woman of the Third Order of St. Dominic. One day, when talking about eternity, they promised each other that if God desired it, the first one to die would appear to the other one. After five years following that promise, Cornelia died and within three days presented herself to her companion, while she was in her cell kneeling at the foot of the crucifix. Amazed by the apparition, the religious said: “O Cornelia, my Cornelia, how happy I am to see you again! So where are you now? Certainly you will be in the bosom of God, whom you served in this life with much zeal and love!” ‘Alas! Not yet – the soul responded –. You see how different the judgments of God are from the ones of men! I am in a place of suffering and will have to stay there still for sometime in expiation of the sins of my life, that could have been more faithful and more ardent.’ Then taking her friend by her hand, she added: ‘Come with me, and I will show you wondrous things.’ As they walked, they arrived to a wide field filled with beautiful vines, on whose leaves were imprinted some characters. ‘Read’, said Cornelia to her friend. The religious stopped to see more closely and surprisingly found her own defects and daily imperfections marked on those

leaves. She therefore asked what that meant. ‘Nothing strange, my sister – answered Cornelia – didn't you perhaps read many times those words said by our Lord at the last supper: *I am the vine and you are the branches?* Each of our actions, good or bad, is a leaf of this mystical vine; to enter heaven it is necessary that the bad leaves are destroyed and consumed by fire: but, be consoled, my sister, since looking much closer, you will see that little remains for you to destroy, you having faithfully persevered in your virginal promises, and served with zeal your good teacher. It is true that your shortcomings are still numerous, but not as many as mine since I lived on earth very different situations, and I want to convince you’. And walking again, they found themselves in a place filled with vines which were intertwining from all sides, in a way that the leaves were covering the ground. The religious rushed to see what was on those leaves, but Cornelia stopped her and said: ‘My divine Savior does not allow you to know right now the offenses that I did to Him, and wants to save me from much shame. Read only what you will find written on the leaves that you see close to you’. Therefore looking attentively at the nearest leaves, she discovered all the shortcomings committed by the deceased at church: irreverence, distractions, and the needless conversations. ‘O my Jesus



– screamed the religious – what must one do to remedy so many shortcomings? How come that after your so frequent Confessions and Communions, after the indulgences earned by you, there remains so much for you to expiate?’ ‘What you say is right, o sister, but know that for my tepidity and for the habit that I developed, I did not obtain all the fruit that I should have from my Communions and Confessions, and regarding the indulgences, having earned very few of them, three or four at the most, due to my usual distractions and lack of fervor, it is necessary that I now undertake the penance that I did not do when it would have been much easier.’”

