
The life of Humiliana de Cerchi — biography of a new type saint

Yulia V. Rodionova

This article precedes the publication of the Russian translation of the life of Blessed Humiliana de Cerchi (1219-1246), known as the woman-mystic of Florence. Humiliana is the first tertiary, whose life was described in the form of "Vita". The text created by her contemporary — the Franciscan monk Vito da Cortona, contains the most interesting information on representations of some part of society of the first half of the XIII century about obedience, meekness and good deeds. The life was written immediately after the death of Humiliana, and the author's goal was not only to present her as a new Saint, but also to create a new model of "holiness".

Key words: religious mysticism, tertiary, XIII century, Humiliana de Cerchi.

Relationships and Activities: not.

Yulia V. Rodionova*, independent researcher, MD; Graduate of Lomonosov Moscow State University, Department of Church History (2012), PhD student of Institute of Scientific Information for Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences (INION RAN) (Medieval History, 2013-2016); Moscow. ORCID: 0000-0002-6378-6317, IRID: 240336971. Special interests — Medieval History, religious movements.

*Corresponding author: cardio2008@yandex.ru

Received: 30.11.2019

Revision Received: 23.01.2020

Accepted: 23.01.2020

For citation: Yulia V. Rodionova. The life of Humiliana de Cerchi — biography of a new type Saint. *Russian Journal of Church History*. 2020;1(1):5. (In Russ.)

doi:10.15829/2686-973X-2020-1-1-5

Blessed Humiliana de Cerchi (1219-1246) is known as a female mystic from Florence and is the first tertiary (representative of the third order of Saint Francis of Assisi, consisting of laypeople), whose life was described in the form of a “Life”. This text, created by her contemporary — the Franciscan monk Vito da Cortona (Vito of Cortona) [*Vitus Cortonensis* 1685] [*Moreni* 1827] contains interesting information about the ideas of some part of society in the first half of the XIII century about obedience, meekness and good deeds. The Life was written immediately after the death of bl. Humiliana, and the author’s goal was not only to present her as a new Saint, but also to create a new model of “holiness”, showing that in worldly life it is possible to follow the Charter of the Franciscan order. The Life is accompanied by about forty-seven miracles performed after the death of the bl. Humiliana. Although religious veneration began in Florence during Humiliana’s lifetime, She was declared “blessed” only in 1634 (the process of canonization was initiated by the family historian Alessandro de’ Cerchi), and finally recognized by the Roman Church in 1694.

*Vita beatæ Humiliane de Cerchis*¹ (“Life of bl. Humiliana de Cerchi”) is given very little attention in Russian literature. However, this book is one of the first attempts to create a new type of Life, according to the latest requirements of the canonization process.

Studies of the Life of bl. Humiliana in Western literature are mainly based on the study of her cult², her relationship with the family³, or the name of bl. Humiliana is mentioned in various contexts in the works of researchers of the cults of saints in the Middle ages and women mystics⁴.

¹ Vito Cortonensis (1685). *Vita beatæ Humiliane de Cerchis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, Maii IV, Antwerp, pp. 385-400; Domenico Moreni (1827). *Leggenda della Beata Umiliana De Cherchi*. Testo Inedito. Nella Stamperia Magheri, Firenze, p. 152.

² Battelli, G. (1940). *La leggenda della beata Umiliana de’ Cerchi*, Florence; Davidsohn, R. (1956). *Storia di Firenze*, 2.1, Guelfi e ghibellini, Florence, 1956; trans. Geschichte von Florenz, 2.1, Guelfen und Ghibellinen [Berlin, 1908]], pp. 180-88; Franco, M. R. (1977). *La Beata Umiliana de Cerchi*, Rome; Lazzeri, Z. (1921). La Beata Umiliana dei Cerchi, *Studi francescani*, 7, pp. 196-206; Leonardi C. and Pozzi, G. (1988). Umiliana Cerchi, *Scrittrici mistiche italiane*, Genoa, pp. 80-93; Benvenuti Papi, A. (1980). Umiliana dei Cerchi: nascita di un culto nella Firenze del Duecento, *Studi francescani*, 77, pp. 87-117; Benvenuti Papi, A. (1990). La Santa Vedova, in *“In castro poenitentiae”*: Santità e società femminile nell’Italia medievale, Rome, pp. 58-98; Benvenuti Papi, A. (1960). Cerchi, Umiliana, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Rome, 23, pp. 692-96; Storini, M. C. (1995). Umiliana e il suo biografo: Costruzione di un’agiografia femminile fra XIII e XIV secolo, *Annali d’Italianistica*, 13, pp. 19-39; Beck, J. (1989). The Reliquary Bust of the Beata Umiliana de’ Cerchi, *Antichità Viva*, 28, pp. 41-44; Bemporad, D. L. (1987). Due busti reliquiario in Santa Croce di Firenze, *Antichità Viva*, 26, pp. 59-68; Procacci, U. (1976). Una lettera del Balducci e antiche immagini della Beata Umiliana de’ Cerchi, *Antichità Viva*, 15, pp. 3-10.

³ Schuchman, A. M. (1997). The Lives of Umiliana de’ Cerchi: Representations of Female Sainthood in Thirteenth-Century Florence. *Essays in medieval studies*. Vol. 14.

⁴ Benvenuti Papi, A. (1990). *In castro poenitentiae*; Bell R.M. (1985). *Holy Anorexia*, Chicago; Bornstein, D. and Rusconi, R. (1992). *Mistiche e devote nell’Italia tardomedievale*, Naples; Bynum, C. W. (1992). *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, New York; Bynum, C. W. (1987). *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, Berkeley; Bynum, C. W. (1982). *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, Berkeley and Los Angeles; *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women* (1995). Carpenter, J. and MacLean, S-B., ed., Urbana and Chicago; Goodich, M. (1981).

The Life is based on visions — personal experience of bl. Humiliana, written from her words or the words of witnesses, which is incognizable (irrational), and then requires additional interpretation. If the visions have a rational element, are systematized and have a certain meaning that is already clear to the ordinary reader (or the reader who is intended for the message contained in the text), then the question arises — what are the goals of such visions, who wrote them down and why? In the visions, you can also identify the characteristics of what was important at that historical moment to create a complete image of the Saint. Therefore, the researcher faces the following tasks: to identify the author (or authors), to determine the motives and intentions that guided him when writing this work; to identify any patterns between them; to establish how the problem of authorship affects the content of visions.

After analyzing the circumstances that influenced the writer, determining his motives and intentions, you can identify the appearance of the reader and, finally, answer the main question — why was this work created? Thus, several layers will be highlighted in the composition of the Lives: differences in *personality* and *biography*; definition of the *author*, *writer*, *main character* and *reader*.

The phenomenon of medieval autobiography and biography is currently being actively studied [*History of subjectivity: medieval Europe* 2009], but there is a noticeable difference of views on this phenomenon among researchers.

Any creative impulse realized on paper can be systematized by highlighting a number of features in it. Between the two endpoints — the writer and the reader there are a number of circumstances that can be determined in the process of analyzing the text or the historical environment in which the author and his reader are located.

Getting the right answers to questions:

- For what purpose was the text written?
 - What was the motive for the text creation?
 - What did the author want to achieve?
 - Which reader was the text intended for?
 - What actions should the reader perform after reading?
- the researcher will get a complete picture of the work.

From the very beginning, the researcher is faced with an important question — to determine the author and genre of a literary work — biography or autobiography?

The Contours of Female Piety in Later Medieval Hagiography, *Church History*, 50, pp. 20-31; Matter, E. A. and Coakley, J (1994). *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Artistic Renaissance*, Philadelphia; Merlo, G. G. (1993). Santità e condizione femminile nella Toscana medievale, in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Florence, pp. 219-37; Newman B. (1995). *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature*, Philadelphia; Petroff, E. A. (1980.) *Consolation of the Blessed: Women Saints in Medieval Tuscany*, New York; Petroff, E. A. (1994). *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism*, New York; Vauchez, A. (1981). *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age*, Rome; Vauchez, A. (1980). L'ideale di santità nel movimento femminile francescano, in *Movimento religioso femminile e francescanesimo nel secolo XIII*, Assisi.

Although medieval scribes added the words “life” or “Life” to any text, there is still no clear definition of “autobiography”. On the one hand, autobiography is not only the author’s reconstruction of his past, but also his interpretation, which is ultimately determined by the task of self-knowledge⁵. On the other hand, the main subject of criticism: the definition of a “real person” or the description of “one’s own being”? Therefore, a careful study of a literary text raises new questions: what is the difference between “author”, “writer”, “writer”, “narrator” and “main character”⁶?

In the Preface, the author says: “And since it would be a long time to describe each of her actions, here the reader is put on a meadow full of flowers, and a small part of the acts of the greater — for the glory of God, for useful chastity and teaching of listeners, we will take from God-pleasing and mournful deeds”⁷.

On the worldly life of bl. Humiliana a little is known, because within a month after she was married at the age of sixteen⁸, her “conversion” occurred: she began to despise the luxury of the world and jewelry, did not decorate her face. However, she wore smart clothes “to honor marriage”, although she was not happy about it, she perceived it as a torment, but one woman, her husband’s sister (sister-in-law), who was afraid of God, consoled her in this⁹. It should be noted that bl. Humiliana, being the daughter of a famous family in Florence, was married to a representative of no less noble family (not named in the Life), and her husband¹⁰, accordingly, was a rich man who was engaged in trade and usury¹⁰.

The author of the Life notes the following actions of bl. Humiliana as a manifestation of good behavior¹¹:

1. Daily mass in the house.
2. Visiting Holy places.
3. Daily distribution of alms (“how many gave alms in the above year, dressing the naked, visiting the sick, feeling sorry for the poor in God-pleasing matters, we cannot count”).
4. Collecting bread crumbs and leftover food from the table and distributing it to the poor (“she took the leftover bread from her

⁵ *History of subjectivity: medieval Europe* (2009). c. 15.

⁶ There, c. 21.

⁷ Compare it with Fioretti (the flowers of Francis of Assisi) or the message from Greccio (1246): “we did not intend, however, to write a Life, because of his life and the miracles that the Lord performed through him, already compiled “legends”: we collected, as in a multi-colored meadow, a bouquet of flowers that seemed to us more beautiful than others...”.

⁸ In Latin — sexdecim. It is assumed that Humiliana was born in 1219.

⁹ This woman was called Ravenna, who was no less eager to serve God as our heroine; she was older in age, supported her in good deeds, helped her in performing virtuous deeds, accompanied her on trips to churches and visiting places of grace; in General, she was an example, taught her to persevere in good, and to tolerate with joy the obscenities that her husband used to her, trying to extract her from the beginning of the path of benevolence and, especially, from acts of charity.

¹⁰ Usura (usury) was condemned as a terrible sin.

¹¹ Chapters 1-4. Leggenda...

husband's table¹² and hid it, and then gave it to the poor, and after collecting many of the leftovers and hiding them on her chest, full of the pain of compassion, she carried them, along with her sister-in-law, to the needy poor").

5. Dressing up naked ("how many times has she clothed the naked, giving pieces of fabric, even sheets with beds that are cut up and torn, leaving a part of myself, and part of giving to the poor, all on ribbons handed out, not hold at any one, just one piece of linen left at home, and another of silk, also broke the example of St. Martin, and gave most of one beggar, leaving a smaller part to cover her piece of linen").

6. Selling your things and belongings of my husband, and then the distribution of the money to the poor ("the silk jacket¹³, which she had, she sold and gave (money) to the poor"; "cut a big part from the hem [skirt] and sold, and the money distributed to the poor"; "the old woolen cloth belonging to her husband and his, she was secretly taken from the house were sold, and the money gave to the poor").

7. Buying fabrics or home weaving and distributing to the poor ("when the number of things in her husband's room began to decrease, she created with her own hands and from other things that she could have, thus-she made linen fabric or bought ready-made material, and also bought wool fabric, which she tore and distributed to all the poor").

8. Donation for Church needs ("there was no new cup, no Church book, or any other thing related to the altar, and other divine works, where she did not reach out her hand for God-pleasing works"; "when she was asked for flour for the preparation of the host, for the veneration of the Body of Christ, she gave a quarter of flour, but the best flour of the eight quarters selected").

9. Cooking with your hands and distributing, delaying part uneaten at the table ("the weak are more subtle kinds of dishes, or a stronger — she was doing according to the custom of the human, and made it their own hands"; many good meals was removed secretly from his mouth and kept to give to the poor, but for themselves were happy with simple food").

10. Compassion for the sick ("when sick, she, like a grieving mother, having compassion for them, served them; giving and getting what was needed because of such compassion").

Thus, a married woman who wants to turn to God is offered the following model of behavior: secretly from her husband, if his house is rich, not only to give alms to the poor, but also to sell things ("being under the power of the husband" — repeated several times, which may indicate that married women were not allowed to dispose of the husband's property in this way). In the same way, the blessed wife

¹² In original Latin text — *fragmenta panis*, it can be understood as pieces, crumbs, or crumbled bread that was left on the table after dinner.

¹³ This refers to the "cotta".

should meekly suffer for all this not only condemnation (“not asking for honor and worldly vanity, but like the servant of the Lord, not being ashamed to bear dishonor because of the love of Christ”), but also threats (“because her zeal overcame all insult and fear, fear, and unholy entertainment of the flesh. And how many verbal insults she was beaten, reproached by large and small in the house”), and beatings (“even beatings sometimes received for pious acts and insults — all despised and forgot, becoming kindred and meek in relation to the above-named detractors and insults to her deeds, and nothing in her way of thinking changed, she distanced herself”).

However, with the diseases of their neighbors, in particular — children, bl. Humiliana rejoiced that “they will become blissful if they go away so blameless and carry away the blamelessness with them”.

About the suffering of bl. Humiliana herself in this period said the following: “often in the house of her husband, she suffered so much from the pain of the stomach and insides that it seemed-she always gives birth”¹⁴. The author notes that bl. Humiliana never complained and endured her sufferings patiently, because “she often fell ill heavily, because it seemed to her that what she did to the creation of God, she did to the Creator. Having in mind what Jesus Christ says in the gospel: “what you do to the poor, you do it for me”¹⁵.

After the death of her husband bl. Humiliana remained for some time in his house, which is the completion of one of the stages in her life, which will then be directed to the immersion in a hermit's life until her death (1241-1246).

From this moment, the author of the Life records her first visions and revelations: the Lord showed “before her the glory of heaven, which she soon had to acquire, why she saw herself dressed in snow-white clothes, which meant in this life — purity, and in another life-she was decorated and was in the company of Holy angels”. Details of the visions of this time are not described, but it is worth noting the characteristic features — “snow-white clothes” and “society of angels”, as special signs of being in Heaven. Thus, what had already been done was enough to become “chosen by God” and be awarded “holiness”.

The next fifty-eight chapters (sixty-four chapters in total) are devoted to the second period (moving to the father's house) and include a set of stories from the life of bl. Humiliana, which confirm the above, and aims at providing tangible evidence of “holiness”.

Bl. Humiliana, apparently, according to the law, returns to her father's house and refuses to remarry, despite all the entreaties and threats of relatives: “Bring me the one you want to give me as a husband, and on the other hand light a brazier, and when I am put

¹⁴ This condition was not associated with any “demonic torment”, on the contrary, is positively emphasized that Humiliana suffered.

¹⁵ Matt. 25:45.

between these two sides, I will take the one I want”¹⁶. Apparently, while bl. Humiliana was relatively free to act at this time, but continued to help the poor until her father took some legal action to restrict bl. Humiliana in her freedom.

At this stage of further study of the Life, it should be noted that the action takes place as if in several historical time streams: there are events of everyday life associated with the activities of the Cerchi family, bl. Humiliana is in her altered stream of consciousness, and the author of the Life selects and interprets information in his own way.

For example, the story of the inheritance loss of bl. Humiliana¹⁷ has several layers in the narrative. Her father, Glivieri de Cerchi, decided to get back his daughter’s dowry, which he had given for her under the marriage contract. The husband’s relatives, apparently, refused this (judging by the initial chapters, deciding that bl. Humiliana and so gave away all to the poor). It follows from the text that at this stage the dowry legally belonged to bl. Humiliana. A court was set up, “certain strangers and strangers, judges, heads of the commune, and others authorized to do so”, and the father asked for bl. Humiliana, give him “the word and freedom of action for the gift document” so that “you will receive back your dowry”. She gives him this permission: “let Your will be done, so long as I do not swear, for I would not swear for any reason”¹⁸. Further, according to carta publica, her dowry was taken away from her, and, admitting this, she said: “I did not believe that my father wanted to act fraudulently against me: this is how he deprived me of the dowry that he had given me before,” and then patiently bearing everything, she said: “As I see, there is no faith on earth, because the father deceives and takes away from the daughter, owning me. And therefore, let my father henceforth hold me not as a daughter, but as a servant and a servant.” Thus, there was a certain legal action-the father at the court takes his daughter’s dowry, with her permission, from her husband’s family and gets full power over his own daughter. Return the words of bl. Humiliana somewhat at odds with the image that gives her the author of the life of the title “as she took it gently”. The author already further deduces his thought from the Franciscan positions that bl. Humiliana carried in her heart the word of Christ, who said: “he who does not deny any thing that he possesses”¹⁹ cannot be his disciple, and he who takes off his shirt, let him also take off his cloak”²⁰. He adds: “because of this injustice and insult, when she was deprived of her dowry, she almost did not pay attention to it at all, but wished to ascend to full perfection. Completely

¹⁶ Chapter 5. Leggenda...

¹⁷ Chapter 6. Leggenda...

¹⁸ A strange formula that was more commonly used among the Waldenses, who considered any oath a mortal sin.

¹⁹ Matt. 5:42.

²⁰ Matt. 5:40.

based on divine love, she, nor the hostility of fate, neither by prosperity, are not estranged from God, and henceforth, she could not help the poor as before, but as he could, helped them; from that often carried on the chest of bread to the needy, visiting Holy places, not paying attention to threats and torture inflicted by her”.

Thus, the loss of the dowry by the cunning father is interpreted as a wish of the bl. Humiliana itself to follow the path of poverty and abstinence, for the sake of improving the soul.

After this, an order was given that she, along with her maid, should have “four flocks of grain a month, and other things in moderation”. Bl. Humiliana was lodged in a room in the tower²¹ and at first still went with some friends to Holy places, visits of beggars were reduced, although “she visited noble women and gentle God-fearing townswomen, asking them for alms for the poor reclusive sisters, in the name of love for God, which she took in a pocket (bag) specially made for this, and carried alms to the above-mentioned poor”. But, apparently, soon this way of getting alms became unavailable, so bl. Humiliana is completely shut up in prayer vigils in her “cell”.

The author of the Life writes that bl. Humiliana wanted to join the poor monastery of Monticelli, but the Lord, who had ordered it differently, did not allow her, because he wanted her to become an example to anyone who wants to serve him perfectly. Thus, bl. Humiliana, “dressed in a worldly dress, led a life and had the habits of a perfect believer, trying to please and loving God with an immeasurable love”. The author convinces readers that even in this case, the blessed one was no different from the nun or the Holy hermits, contrasting her with those “who, leaving the world, run away from their relatives, and in hermithood enter the gate to serve God. And she shut herself up in her father’s house and, fighting, defeated the worldly, the devil, and the carnal in the midst of the laity”.

At this stage, her wonderful visions and visits begin. They can be systematized by highlighting the main areas:

1. Communion with God

– Bl. Humiliana does not engage in a direct dialogue with God, but only prays and listens to the will: The Lord “did not allow” or “allowed”.

– “Oh, how many times has she flown higher in her mind-more than many others, rising above herself, connecting with God by wonderful contemplation and true chastity of the senses and body, and in the womb, with the source of divine sweetness, and falling asleep. In this state and degree of contemplation bl. Humiliana tasted the hidden manna²² that Saint John speaks of in the Apocalypse, and says that no one knows it, and no one knows it, except the one who receives

²¹ It should be noted that the word “tower” here refers to a typical Florentine house of the time, in which the whole family lived.

²² Apoc. 2:17.

it; and because no man could speak fully of his grace if he did not taste sweetly what this Saint tasted”²³.

- Miraculously, the Lord turns on the light in the cell at her prayer.
- Gives water or bread, turns water into wine or water into oil for a lamp.
- Appears in the image of the Holy Trinity, the Holy spirit, or Jesus Christ the child.

2. Communication with the devil

The main purpose of the appearance of the devil in her visions was: to interrupt her prayer and divine worship, to break her vow of silence, given during the fast. The devil not only scares her, deceives her with different images, but also uses physical violence. The latter makes us focus more on a careful reading of the visions, because at this stage the action comes out of an irrational perception of reality, which can be interpreted by various kinds of hallucinations.

As stated above, bl. Humiliana is involved in the events of everyday life, but does not identify them with reality, for her time seems to freeze in constant prayer, interrupted by brief periods of sleep or eating, but with the help of the devil, her consciousness is constantly pulled out of this state. He constantly suggests that she look at something and give an interpretation of what she saw. So, the appearance of new people in her cell, except for the confessor — friar Michael (although she hardly recognizes him, sometimes), is perceived by bl. Humiliana as a diabolical obsession. She is brought to the bodies of the dead, she refuses to respond to it — for her, the devil brings the bodies of the dead.

What in this case Angers the devil to such an extent that he begins to beat her? During the fast, she took a vow of silence, it is logical to assume that none of her household knew about it. It is during this period that frequent visits of the devil begin (note that the images are separate, the devil appears separately): first he brought the bodies of the dead, then the image of the Mother of God and her baby, the image of the sister-in-law of Ravenna, and constantly asked to talk to someone from them. After bl. Humiliana each time showed disgust, “the devil, disappearing with his images, beat her on the lower back, in such a way that this beating made her teeth chatter so much and at the same time that from all this concussion and pain in her teeth, she spent fifteen days so that she could not chew food”²⁴. The next time she saw again the bodies of a murdered man and woman brought by the devil, cruelly torn and all bloodied, who told her: “that this murder was committed by their loving people, in a dirty way arguing with each other. And there²⁵ you can almost with health be married to a noble and powerful person, but you do not want”. She was silent again, the

²³ Глава 9. Leggenda...

²⁴ Глава 14. Leggenda...

²⁵ Not quite clear fragment. Apparently, she was being asked to marry a man from another city.

devil lost his patience, seeing that he was being neglected, beat her hard on the back, disappeared with a great cry, saying: "I will send you to all the demons of Hell!"

The next fragment begins with the murder of the priest of the Church of Santo Apostolo in Florence, whose bloodied body is again brought to her by the devil and asks: "Look carefully at the enormous cruelty. How the priest was dishonorably killed and now lies dead before you, and yet have great compassion on him!". But again, she doesn't pay attention. This episode is immediately followed by the following one (i.e. there is a description of some actual events that began with the murder of a priest): "when the townspeople were fighting among themselves, even with ballistae and throwing machines [Villani 1997], and when the city was burning in different places²⁶, the devil appeared and said: "get up, daughter, and look at the city, as everything is destroyed and burned." bl. Humiliana replied: "Brother body, if you want to see such a thing, go and see, but the soul should not go to all this". When the devil heard this, he retreated in confusion, but at the same time he squeezed her throat so often and hard that she was afraid of being strangled, but God did not allow it. And so the devil could not fulfill his will. And so tied her shoulders and legs around that she seemed dressed all in lead, and could not help getting up, not moving from the place. But I gained enough dexterity that I was able to make the sign of the cross"²⁷.

Thus, very much in these fragments indicates communication with the father or some significant relative and the perception of his figure as diabolical.

However, in the Life there are descriptions of the devil, which are already irrational visions: he appears in the form of a serpent, first disembodied, which she easily copes with, and then in the flesh, who sleeps with her in bed for several days, while bl. Humiliana can't pacify it. And after she had endured three days without wishing to harm her prayers, she said to the serpent that remained by her side: "I command you by the power of the name of my beloved Christ, that you should curl up immediately, without delay, and immediately-here, at my hands!". At these words, the serpent bowed its head, twisting itself into a ball. The author of the Life makes a significant conclusion about the power of bl. Humiliana one word to drive away the devil's power to turn the most feared predators into meek and obedient.

²⁶ This event is not mentioned in the Chronicles of Florence. This intense struggle dates back to 1248, when the Guelphs were expelled from the city. It is mentioned by Giovanni Villani (1997). *A new chronicle or history of Florence*. M. Nauka., Chapter 33. How the Ghibellines, with the help of the Emperor Frederick, first expelled the Guelph party from Florence. ... So in Florence began the turmoil and civil war, among the nobles and all the people there was a ferment and strife: who sided with one party, who the other, and in all parts of the city clashes broke out. [...] The Guelphs resisted until Wednesday, and then, unable to resist the Ghibellines any longer, they withdrew their defenses and left the city on the night of Candlemas 1248 (February 2, 1249).

²⁷ Chapter 15. Leggenda...

3. *Communication with confessor — friar Michael²⁸ and other people*

It should be noted that the cult of bl. Humiliana was later actively supported by the Franciscans of Santa Croce, where she was buried. With friar Michael, she establishes a trusting relationship, he asks bl. Humiliana for prayers for him, and she tells him about the visions “when I prayed for you, God showed me you in a white robe, and so it seems to me that God loves you”. The *Life* describes cases when not only monks, but also ordinary people were healed by her prayer, and experienced the divine sweetness.

From the general context of the *Life*, we can distinguish the author’s insistent desire not only to imagine the life of bl. Humiliana (she is named several times in the text as Saint), similar to the desert hermits, but also to point out the qualities — meekness and humility as the highest virtues. Also, the work is filled with wonderful lifetime achievements, which should indicate to the reader the ability to create miracles.

Thus, the life of bl. Humiliana is a model of literature that met all the requirements of the time of its writing — the middle of the XIII century., not only canonical, but also the needs of the Franciscan order for the glorification of their own saints. The process of canonization was never started, apparently due to the struggle of the Guelph and Ghibelline parties in Florence. The text of the *Life* is not yet fully studied and interpreted, in general terms, we can say that there are several layers in it — an individual perception of the events of the bl. Humiliana herself, what she told the confessor, and he thought it important to tell, the testimonies of other people who surrounded bl. Humiliana, but not her family members, who are represented very negatively²⁹. Apparently, the material was collected from scattered testimonies, and then was divided into chapters. The author tried to follow the chronology, which can be put to his credit, because events follow one another in development. Although sometimes this connection is not obvious at first glance. According to the composition of the witnesses, it is clear that bl. Humiliana is a “female” Saint, although the text of the *Life* is influenced by the male and monastic environment, which interprets her actions from its own position and places emphasis on things that interest more Franciscans.

For the reader of the *Life*, it is important that we are talking about a woman, firstly, who does not keep her virginity, and secondly, who is not officially a nun. Thus, we offer a new option (a new way) to achieve holiness — it is not necessary to keep virginity from the very beginning, i.e. everyone can change their life, man and woman, at any

²⁸ Michael of Florence, from the noblest family of Alberti and from the order of St. Francis, in which he received his clothes, is a spiritual man, greatly revered and respected for a righteous life — in the whole city and no less, among his brethren, and they, as a faithful servant of God, among their blessed, he was honored, listing martyrologue on March 17.

²⁹ The testimonies of three confessors and thirty women were presented, including two sisters, the wives of three brothers, a nurse, three maids, thirteen married women, two widows, a girl, and a nun.

age; it is not necessary to go into the closure for this — you can start with good deeds and follow them as far as possible and firmness of spirit. And the most important thing for Life is to show the reader that the realization of such a path is possible at will, without predestinations and revelations, without pious parents, dreams of mothers, signs from above, special training.

Relationships and Activities: not.

References

1. Vitus Cortonensis 1685 — Vitus Cortonensis (1685). Vita beatae Humiliana de Cerchis. *Acta Sanctorum*. Maii IV. Antwerp, pp. 385-400
2. Moreni 1827 — Moreni, D. (1827). *Leggenda della Beata Umiliana De Cherchi*. Testo Inedito. Nella Stamperia Magheri. Firenze, p. 152
3. Villani 1997 — Villani, G. (1997). *Nuova Cronica or history of Florence*. M. Nauka. p. 551. ISBN: 5-02-009090-5.
4. History of subjectivity 2009 — *History of subjectivity. Medieval Europe* (2009). Comp. Yu. P. Zaretsky. Suppl. journal Middle ages. M. Academic Project; Gaudeamus. p. 565. ISBN 978-5-8291-1026-0, 978-5-98426-078-7. (In Russ.)