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Ad lectores

The autumn issue of *Antonianum* 2015 takes the form of a "field recording", as it were, focused on the significant figure of Ramon Llull. Llull, though not shown to belong to the Franciscan Order in any explicit way, is indeed – as Miquel Batllori points out – an authoritative witness to the Franciscan *Weltanschauung*, and especially to its missionary connotations.

Indeed, Llull, fully within the Minors' world of ideas, while not taking part in the Order's institutional expansion, cooperated fruitfully in spreading the Franciscan idea of establishing contacts, and even exchanges, with representatives of the Eastern Churches, of the Jews, and of Muslims, as well.

It is, in effect, Llull who made possible a transition from a martyrdom-centred mission to the Muslims to an "ecumenical" mission to the Eastern Churches, which will take Franciscan expansion in yet another direction, towards the Council of Florence. This direction is represented in the frescoes of the Finding of the True Cross that decorate the apse of the Church of St. Francis in Arezzo.

Llull's origins are in Palma de Mallorca, Ciutat de Mallorca, which is within a geographic space identified with Occitan Provence, a region where the Spirituals were active, and which in this sense extends from Provence to Languedoc, and beyond, to central Italy, with Ubertino da Casale's Piedmont serving as a bridge. Narbonne, not a Provençal city yet an Occitan one, stands for the centre of their southwards march. The intertwined houses of Provence and Languedoc, at the end of the thirteenth century, favoured not a little the spreading of the Spirituals to the Kingdoms of Catalonia – Aragon, Majorca and Sicily. As it happened, at the time of crisis for the Spirituals, who were close to extinction between 1320 and 1340, the Iberian royal houses, who were standing in for the Papacy itself in regard to missionary initiative, offered themselves to be their protectors and, moreover, with Robert of Anjou, defended the Spirituals' idea of poverty, producing what amounted to an actual treatise on the matter.

That much said, I willingly leave the specific presentation of this particular issue, dedicated to Llull, to Dr. Sara Muzzi, a leading scholar in this field, whom I wholeheartedly thank for having cooperated so generously in the planning and editing of this publication. Likewise, let me express my deep gratitude also to Professor Pietro Messa, Chair of the Graduate School of Mediaeval and Franciscan Studies, for having promoted this initiative by means of the ideas and the encouragement he constantly offered participants, thus accompanying this undertaking all the way towards its happy accomplishment.

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