Extending the Boundaries of the Sacred in Seventeenth-Century Padua
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Abstract: One of the primary reform goals of the early modern Catholic Church was to delineate between sacred and secular spaces and ensure proper behavior in the former. This was hindered by the fact that the two categories often blurred together in the minds of parochial clergy and laypeople. Bishops like Gregorio Barbarigo of Padua (bp. 1664-97) were tasked with bringing parochial understandings of sacred space in line with official Church expectations. Barbarigo discovered that certain aspects of this larger goal were easier than others. The majority of his laypeople were already comporting themselves honestly during church services, though he did find a few problems. Most also agreed that the parish church and other structures were to be protected from scandal and used in certain ways. In these instances, Barbarigo provided laity with a way to implement or enforce reforms they desired. But when it came to extending the boundaries of the sacred to include the cemetery, traditionally a communal space, Barbarigo faced a much greater challenge. It was in these final stages of reconciling parochial and episcopal ideas about sacred space that bishops like Barbarigo found themselves in conflict with the laity and parochial clergy. Although this was only one small part of the Catholic Church's reform program, the Church's inability to gain the cooperation of its flock on issues of the appropriate use of and behavior in sacred space demonstrates one of the greatest challenges to the Catholic Church's reform program as a whole.

Across early modern Catholic Europe, particularly in the post-Tridentine era, Catholic laypeople and their parish clergy often found themselves in conflict with reforming bishops over the definition of sacred and profane space.[1] For the laity and parish clergy the two often blurred together, while reforming bishops conceived a clear delineation. Bishops, entrusted with reforming their dioceses by the Council of Trent, had to overcome popular concepts of the proper use of parochial space in order to achieve their goals. As they traveled around their dioceses interacting with their flocks, they found that these conflicts took three main valences. Some of the bishop's priorities, such as enforcing proper behavior within the parish church, were generally accepted by the laity if not always followed. Plenty of laypeople still misbehaved, but

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[1] These ideas were not specifically Tridentine, but longstanding goals of the Catholic Church that Tridentine reformers took up and attempted to enforce. For discussions of pre- and post-Tridentine attempts to define sacred space, see *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

most parishioners understood the reform even if they chose not to comply with it and most clergy appreciated the assistance in keeping Mass orderly. Other episcopal priorities, such as defining the proper use of secondary spaces owned by the parish, met with mixed reactions. Some laypeople and parish clergy generally agreed with the bishop's demands to reserve these spaces for church use, while others saw them as outside the boundaries of the holy. Finally, episcopal demands about one external space in particular, the cemetery, were met with widespread resistance, as bishops and laypeople had fundamentally opposed ideas about what was appropriate use and care of that space. When bishops and laity were in relative agreement, reforms slowly took hold, but where they were in conflict episcopal reform plans stalled as neither side was willing to compromise or attempt to understand the issue from the other point of view.

In order to examine this phenomenon in detail, this chapter will explore the interactions between Gregorio Barbarigo, bishop of Padua from 1664-97, and the rural laity and parochial clergy of Padua as Barbarigo attempted to enforce post-Tridentine ideas about sacred space. Barbarigo's episcopacy constitutes an excellent case study for this investigation for several reasons. Padua was one of the wealthiest dioceses in all of Italy, it had already undergone some reforms in the preceding century since the close of the Council of Trent, Barbarigo was incredibly devoted to the project of reform, and the diocese was neither small enough to be easily controlled nor large enough to be unmanageable, with about three hundred extra-urban parishes.[2] Barbarigo had a well-organized reform plan that included one of the finest seminaries in Europe, extensive pastoral visitations, and a network of *vicari foranei* who were intended to help him

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[2] Aldo Stella, "L'età postridentina," in *Diocesi di Padova*, ed. Pierantonio Gios (Padua: Gregoriana libreria editrice, 1996), 237.

maintain control over their regions when he could not be present.[3] His records are also

exceptional. While on pastoral visitations, he performed the majority of the visit personally, his

scribes took detailed notes about his movements, and he took time to meet not only with

parochial clergy but also with laity. His interactions with the members of his flock were recorded

verbatim, in their own dialects. He had two different types of conversations with clergy and laity:

he conducted formal interviews intended only to uncover clerical misdeeds and he held open

audiences during which anyone could appear and share his or her concerns. Although many

historians have cautioned against the use of episcopal visitation interviews, calling them

"archives of repression," Barbarigo's interviews are less restrictive than most.[4] Laypeople had

nothing to fear from Barbarigo due to Venetian laws limiting bishops to punishing clergy.[5]

Barbarigo's interviews also allowed the laity some latitude to raise their own concerns: he ended

each interview asking his witness if he or she had anything else to add "for the good of the visit,"

a question which often yielded interesting and unprompted stories.[6] This openness, combined

with the open audiences, which were not guided by episcopal questions or priorities, allow

historians to understand better what parochial clergy and laity thought about their religion and

the bishop's reforms. Although they certainly may have shaped their testimony with an eye to

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[3] For a more on Barbarigo's reforms of Padua, see Celeste McNamara, "The Tragedy of Tridentine Reform in Late Seventeenth-Century Padua" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2013), especially chapter 2 for the structure of the reform program.

[4] On the archives of repression, see Peter Burke, "The Bishop's Questions and the People's Religion," in *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 40; Keith Luria, *Territories of Grace: Cultural Change in the Seventeenth-century Diocese of Grenoble* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 57.

[5] A Venetian law left over from the Interdict of 1606-7 forbade Barbarigo from asking laity about their own practices (a restriction which he frequently circumvented) and also from taking any punitive action if he happened to discover lay sins. He was allowed to turn them over to the Holy Office, but as the Paduan Holy Office's records were destroyed by Napoleonic forces in the early nineteenth century, it is unclear if Barbarigo ever availed himself of this option. Liliana Billanovich, "Esperienze religiose negate nel tardo seicento. Il parroco e le devote di Alano fra vescovo e communità rurale," in *Studi in onore di Angelo Gambasin*, ed. Liliana Billanovich (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 1992), 105.

[6] The questionnaire used by Barbarigo is printed in Liliana Billanovich Vitale, *Per uno studio delle visite pastorali del Barbarigo II. Gli atti delle visite dal 1672 al 1697* (Padua: Istituto per la storia ecclesiastica padovana, 1984), 126.

achieving desirable results, they most likely did not have the same experiences that they might have had before an inquisitorial judge.[7]

The sources used in this chapter are taken from Barbarigo's own observations as he traveled the diocese, his personal interactions with clergy and laity, and two types of reports he received from clergy. Before each visitation, parish priests were instructed to prepare *relazioni* about their parishes that included information on church finances, parish population, and any problems in the area, particularly with the laity. Most parish priests complied with this demand, though the diligence with which they prepared the reports varies greatly. Twice a year, Barbarigo was also supposed to receive visitation reports from each *vicario foraneo*, who was to inspect each parish in his region and speak to the parish priest there. Barbarigo also expected monthly reports from casuistry meetings he required the vicars to organize and periodic correspondence from any vicar experiencing trouble. Although most of these records are no longer extant, the remaining sample, in conjunction with the other sources described above, allows historians to piece together a picture of the use and abuse of sacred space in the diocese of Padua in the late seventeenth century.[8]

Comprehension if not Compliance

One of the Church's reform goals, to be enforced by both the bishops and individual priests, was to ensure that laypeople respected the parish church and its celebrations. Ideal post-

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[7] In my research, I have given more credence to reports that were corroborated by multiple witnesses, closely investigated by Barbarigo, or which can otherwise be supported by comparing multiple sources. This removes the most suspect reports from analysis, and ultimately, even if the reports remaining were outright fabrications or more subtle misrepresentations, if Barbarigo took them seriously it means he considered them plausible even if not true.

[8] The majority of the *vicari foranei* reports are no longer extant: annually, Barbarigo should have received 92 visitation reports, 552 casuistry meeting reports, and 46 *status animarum* reports from his vicars, but the extant documentation from the *vicari foranei* consists of only a few hundred folios, mostly from 1693-94. Archivio della Curia Vescovile di Padova (henceforth ACVP), *Visitationes Facta Vicar. For. 1580-1756,* b. 1. His correspondence records only contain copies of letters he wrote; he did not preserve the letters he received. Finally, many of the documents of the episcopal curia and tribunal are no longer extant.

Tridentine parishioners listened attentively to services and then went home to pray more rather than going to the tavern after Sunday Mass. For the most part, it seems that parish clergy and laypeople alike understood this demand and even followed it to a certain extent, but it was difficult for them to cease conceiving of the Mass as both a spiritual and a social activity. Mass attendance was high and the misbehavior was rarely so disruptive as to ruin the experience for anyone who may have wanted to sit quietly in rapt attention, but Barbarigo nevertheless uncovered a significant minority of parishes that were failing to live up to ecclesiastical expectations. It is also unclear if the parishes that reported no problems were actually fully (or nearly) reformed or if they were simply better at hiding their behavior. There were no major conflicts between Barbarigo and his flock on this issue, but in some communities the residents persisted in secular pursuits and socialization in the church, which Barbarigo labored to eradicate.

In most parishes, Barbarigo had no reason to believe that laypeople were misbehaving in the church itself, but on a few isolated occasions he found evidence that all or some of the parishioners were failing to give the church the respect it deserved. In these parishes, he worried that the laity gained little edification from the services they attended and he tried to help parochial clergy enforce behavioral norms. Barbarigo, like many reformers, required that men and women be separated in church to minimize distraction and potential scandal; they were to enter through different doors and sit on opposite sides or separate sections, divided by a curtain or screen.[9] Obviously, Barbarigo and diligent parish clergy also expected their parishioners to sit quietly and listen attentively to the service. Although much of the Mass was in Latin, services were supposed to include a vernacular sermon on the Gospel, giving the laity at least one portion

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[9] See Wietse De Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 110. Borromeo even specified that men sit on the south side of the church and women on the north side, with a two-meter tall wooden barrier between them.

of the Mass which they could understand.[10] As vernacular bibles were banned and many

laypeople possessed only a basic literacy if any at all, this was their primary access to biblical

stories.

Barbarigo and his clergy also expected people to show their respect for the church by

showing up on time, dressing properly, and not loitering around the church before, during, or

after services. These were common behavioral standards for the post-Tridentine Church.[11] In the

priest's *relazione,* Barbarigo asked if priests had a problem with "irreverence in the church," a

question which about a third of the priests answered.[12] In roughly a third of the parishes where

priests answered this particular question (between thirty and forty parishes each visit),

parishioners were failing to meet expectations.[13] Men and women mingled and wealthy families

installed personal pews behind the women's section or near the main altar, either mixing the

sexes or impeding the community's access to the Eucharist. People chatted, gossiped, and

laughed during the services. Priests observed courtship rituals in church when men and women

mixed. Women wore revealing clothing and left their veils at home, while men came to church

carrying their weaponry, a practice explicitly banned by Barbarigo. Finally, many men chose to

"attend" services by standing outside around the church door, talking and paying little to no

attention to the service inside.[14]

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[10] Lay complaints in parishes where priests failed to provide a weekly sermon (or whose sermons were not up to standards) suggest that sermons were an expected and desired part of Sunday services by Barbarigo's episcopacy. For examples, see ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 85, fols. 1-2; and ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 57, fols. 332r-335r.

[11] See Angelo Turchini, *Clero e fedeli a Rimini in età post-tridentina* (Rome: Herder Editrice e Libreria, 1978), 39; De Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul,* 111-13.

[12] The formula is printed in Liliana Billanovich Vitale, "Per uno studio delle visite pastorali del Barbarigo 1. Note introduttive alla prima visita (1664-1671)," *Contributi alla storia della Chiesa padovana nell'età moderna e contemporanea* 1 (1982): 33-85. Out of between 300-310 visits in each visitation, 90-100 parish priests provided an answer to this particular question.

[13] See, for example ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 31, fols. 210r-214r.

[14] Although not all priests elaborated on the problems (some just said "there is irreverence"), some provided details. Over the course of the three visitations, Barbarigo received reports of mixing sexes in 23 parishes, problems with pews in 23 parishes, chatting during services in 17 parishes, scandalous courtship in 23 parishes (some of this was

While these offenses were reported in only a small number of parishes, it is possible they were more widespread, given the number of parish priests who refused to answer the question about irreverence. Historian Marc Forster found that clergy in German lands made similar complaints about lay behavior during mass and they interpreted this lay misbehavior as an unwillingness to afford the Mass the level of respect demanded by the institutional Church.[15] Perhaps the same was true of the Paduan laity - they respected the church enough to show up at Mass, but not enough to sit through it quietly, preferring to sustain the social function of Sunday services. There were many reasons why people might misbehave. Feast days may have been the only time some villagers saw certain friends and neighbors. They were an excellent time for a young woman to attract the attention of a suitor, as her honor depended on her being relatively sheltered from young men at most times. The endowment and placement of private pews demonstrated family wealth and power. Guns and swords were indicators of social status. Finally, laypeople, particularly those who chose to stand outside, may have simply been bored listening to the same incomprehensible services week after week. But Barbarigo, like other reformers, was uninterested in accommodating these aspects of social life and simply demanded laypeople behave appropriately.

While in most reports priests complained about one or two offenses, occasionally Barbarigo found parishes in which it seems that the majority of the community was failing to behave properly. In the parish of Megliadino San Fidenzio in 1689, Barbarigo issued a decree ordering the people to stop their irreverence and abuses. He demanded that "no one bear firearms in the Church especially during Mass and divine offices," that no one appear with vain hairstyles

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outside of the church, however), improperly dressed women in 8 parishes, men bearing arms in 34 parishes, and men standing around the church doors in 45 parishes.

[15] Marc Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque: Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 125.

or accessories, that "the women should dress modestly and not come to church with uncovered heads or vain ornaments," and that the men refrain from loitering in front of the main doors during the Mass or divine offices, to show "more respect and reverence for the sacred place."[16]

In some cases, the parish clergy were either unconcerned with lay behavior or unable to stop it, leaving Barbarigo to try different strategies to bring everyone into compliance. In the parish of Masi, Barbarigo discovered that the priest was allowing people to "enter the church armed to hear the Mass and other divine offices" and ordered the priest to "make a series of admonitions advising them to leave their weapons outside or he would leave the church."[17] If they refused to comply, Barbarigo ordered the priest under threat of suspension to "leave the Altar and the church on any solemn occasion of the year," leaving the defiant parishioners without services.[18] This drastic reaction could deprive the entire parish of services if some men refused to comply, suggesting that this was an offense about which Barbarigo cared deeply and that it was also a serious problem in Masi. Presumably, if the priest walked out, the rest of the community would immediately demand that the noncompliant men abandon their weapons at the door, turning the currently indifferent laypeople into allies of reform. To further enforce his ban on weapons in the church and, perhaps, to give parish clergy more support when they attempted to scold their parishioners, Barbarigo also involved the *podestà*, who issued a decree threatening "financial and corporal penalties" for anyone bearing arms in church.[19] Overall, the issue of proper decorum in church was mostly an issue of enforcement; the laypeople did not seem to

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[16] "Che nessuno porti arme da fuocho in Chiesa massime nel tempo della Santa Messa, e divini offiti... Che le donne debbano vestire modestamente e non venire alla Chiesa col capo scoperto ne con ornamenti di vanità... Maggiore rispetto e riverenza del luoco sacro." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 58, fols. 106v-107r.

[17] "Entrar in Chiesa armati per udir la messa, e agl'altri officii Divini... gli faccia una seria ammonitione avvisandolo o di lasciar fuori l'armi o di uscirsene di Chiesa lui." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 50, fol. 36r.

[18] "Esso parocho partirsi dall'Altare e dalla Chiesa sia in qualsivoglia solennità dell'anno." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 50, fol. 36r.

[19] Gregorio Barbarigo, *Lettere pastorali, editti, e decreti publicati in diversi tempi dall'Eminentissimo e reverendissimo Sig. Gregorio Barbarigo vescovo di Padova* (Padua: Seminario di Padova, 1690), 70.

combat ecclesiastical priorities overtly, they were simply noncommittal in their compliance with them.[20]

Conflicts over Peripheral Spaces

Laypeople's interactions with the bishop were a bit more complicated when it came to defining the proper use of peripheral spaces like the churchyard, old church buildings, and parish houses. Most people accepted that parish houses were supposed to be decent and inhabited by clergy and that churchyards and other parochial buildings were supposed to be reserved for ecclesiastical purposes, but there were isolated instances of misuse of these spaces. In these cases, the community was generally unhappy and sought Barbarigo's assistance, although it is unclear if the parishioners agreed with his strict delineation of sacred and profane space or if the transgressions in question were against community norms. At the very least, laypeople in these cases adopted Barbarigo's language about sacred space to attract his attention, demonstrating that even if they did not agree with the Church, they were aware of its expectations.

One such case happened in 1669 in the village of Terranova, where Barbarigo found the community disturbed by a structure in the churchyard under the control of a very scandalous and imperious villager named Francesco Cabianca. Cabianca was under the special protection of a Venetian nobleman whose country estate was nearby, and the community was afraid of Cabianca and his patron. Witnesses told Barbarigo that the nobleman had taken a fancy to Cabianca's wife and offered him protection and money in return for his acquiescence to his wife becoming the

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[20] This is not to say that there were no examples of outright resistance: Barbarigo dealt with one case in which the priest was powerless to enforce the rules. See McNamara, *The Tragedy of Tridentine Reform*, 298-300.

nobleman's mistress (there is no indication of the wife's opinion of this situation.)[21] The laymen

explained that several years earlier, Cabianca had been responsible for the church fabric fund and

had taken advantage of this position and of his power within the village. The priest had been

imprisoned by the Venetian government - his crime is not noted - and in his absence Cabianca

had taken money from the alms box and used it to build a small house in the churchyard. Not

only had he stolen from the church, but he also failed to get either ecclesiastical or secular

license for his construction project. Then, rather than turning the house over to the church for use

as a parish house or to garner income for the parish, he rented it to a layman and kept the money

for himself.[22] Four laymen and the priest testified that the entire village was scandalized by

Cabianca's actions, but because Cabianca was known to be violent and enjoyed the protection of

a powerful family, they were afraid to challenge him.

The priest, now returned from jail, admitted to Barbarigo that he felt powerless. He told

the bishop that he had considered taking Cabianca to court in Venice, but his benefice was small

and he had no money for a lawyer or legal fees. He asked Barbarigo to order Cabianca to

demolish the house or, at the very least, to turn it over to the church so that the rent money could

go to the parish.[23] In the end, Barbarigo decreed that the house be destroyed within one month at

Cabianca's expense.[24] As the priest was now back in residence and the villagers seemed horrified

by Cabianca's actions, it was likely that their churchyard would not be further molested or

misused; they simply needed the superior authority of their Venetian patrician bishop to counter

Cabianca and his noble protectors. In cases like these, reforms could succeed if the bishop and

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[21] ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 87, fol. 35.
[22] ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 87, fol. 36.
[23] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 36, fol. 450.
[24] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 36, fol. 445r.

laity worked together; the laypeople agreed with the reforms and would do their best to police their parish, but they needed outside assistance for the initial implementation of the change.

In some communities, clergy and laypeople were disturbed by the misuse of the parish house and sought Barbarigo's assistance to restore order. In the parish of Battaglia, the priest had been banished from the Venetian Republic for maintaining a scandalous concubine and for mishandling the parish silver. He had left the region as ordered, but his concubine had refused to vacate the parish house.[25] This left the current clergymen without free housing, forcing them to spend some of their benefice renting a place to live, and it also caused scandal within the village. Witnesses told Barbarigo that the woman had a bad reputation and was frequently visited by people "suspect of dishonesty."[26] They suggested that she was a prostitute, telling Barbarigo that her presence "made the parish house into a bordello."[27] Though Barbarigo's response was not recorded in this case, his reaction to a similar problem in another town provides an indication of his displeasure at laity living in parish houses. In this second situation, Barbarigo called lay usurpation of the house dishonest, "a grave offense to God," and "damaging to the holy space."[28] He ordered them to leave immediately so that the chaplain could take possession of the house. Again, when laypeople agreed with episcopal reforms, whether out of a similar definition of the proper use of sacred space or simply because these transgressions offended community mores, they were able to enlist Barbarigo's assistance to restore order and his reform program progressed.

In some parishes, the person misusing parochial property was the priest instead of a recalcitrant layperson, increasing the need for Barbarigo's superior authority to correct the

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[25] ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 84, fols. 135r-156r.
[26] "Molte persone sospette d'inhonestà." ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 84, fol. 135r.
[27] "La detta casa parochiale è fatta un Bordello." ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 84, fol. 139v.
[28] "Gravi ofesa Dei, et iniuria loci sacri." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 59, fol. 325r.

problem. In the parish of Granze, the priest had built an unauthorized oven next to the church.

According to lay witnesses, it caused disorder because sometimes during services the people

"hear words that are not good and are dishonest [presumably the workers], and also the smoke

from the oven damages the church."[29] In the town of Arzergrande, the people complained about

the priest's unusual use of old church structures. Their parish church had been rebuilt, but the old

church still stood. The parish priest, who was heavily involved in his family's agricultural

enterprises, allowed the shepherds in his employ to sleep in the former sacristy while they let

their animals roam inside the old church. Although the church was no longer used for services,

the laity still considered it sacred space and were offended by the priest's cavalier treatment of

the building; one witness specifically charged that the priest had "converted it to profane use."[30]

In general, when it came to individuals or small groups misusing parish houses and

churchyards, it seems that the bulk of the community wanted the abuse stopped but lacked the

resources to accomplish that until Barbarigo arrived. In these situations, Barbarigo was able to

effect reforms, at least temporarily and potentially permanently, because the laity were eager to

cooperate; what was required was not the reforming bishop's new ideas, but the nobleman's

social capital and political power. But when Barbarigo tried to reform the way laypeople used

their cemeteries, no amount of political authority or reforming goals was sufficient to alter the

ways laity and many parochial clergy thought about the burial ground.

Resisting the Bishop: The Case of Cemeteries

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[29] "Ben spesso s'odono parole che non stanno bene, e dishoneste anco nell'atto che se celebra...oltresche il fumo del forno dannifica la Chiesa." ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 85, fol. 1r-v.

[30] Havendola convertita in uso profano." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 37, fol. 197r.

Although Barbarigo found that at least some clergy and parishioners had accepted ecclesiastical standards with regards to their churches, parish houses, and other similar structures, they did not extend the same understanding to cemeteries. The Church expected the cemetery to be fenced or walled in, visually separating it from secular space and preventing animals from roaming around. The cemetery needed a large stone or wooden cross in the center to designate it as sacred ground, and was to be barren of all vegetation, even grass, and kept tidy. It was not to be the site of social interactions.[31] The laity, in contrast, considered the walls, fences, and crosses inconvenient or unnecessary, often used the land for agricultural purposes, and saw no problem with socializing in the cemetery. In most cases, their priests did not interfere, suggesting that they either agreed with lay use of the cemetery or were not especially scandalized by the laity's behavior, even if they knew it to be illicit. In most parishes where Barbarigo found problems with the cemetery, neither the priest nor the parishioners made any mention of the cemetery's poor maintenance or profane use; only occasionally did a priest or vicar make a note of any problems in their reports.[32] This utter disconnect between ecclesiastical and parochial conceptions of what was acceptable use of and behavior in the cemetery was common across Catholic Europe; many historians who study Tridentine Reform have noted that bishops found enforcing regulations about cemeteries to be incredibly challenging.[33] In other words, while rural clergy and laity sometimes expressed scandal and dismay when the parish

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[31] See Paul Adam, *La vie paroissiale en France au XIV siècle* (Paris: Sirey, 1964), 122-23, for a discussion of the same diocesan requirements in fourteenth-century France.

[32] This was noted in six parishes in the first visitation, only one parish in the second, and seven parishes in the third. Yet in Barbarigo's own visitation notes, he frequently found the cemeteries to be disorderly and left instructions for their improvement.

[33] Waldemar Kowalski, "Change in Continuity: Post-Tridentine Rural and Parish Life in the Cracow Diocese", *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 35 (2004): 689-715; Jill Fehleison, *Boundaries of Faith: Catholics and Protestants in the Diocese of Geneva* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2010), 223; Allyson Poska, *Regulating the People: The Catholic Reformation in Seventeenth-Century Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 31.

house or other structures were misused, they saw no problem with how they were using and maintaining their burial grounds.

The cemetery was not a problem in every parish; some cemeteries were in compliance with ecclesiastical requirements and Barbarigo simply noted them as "cemeterium ad formam" in his visitation reports. But in the majority of his parishes, Barbarigo found one or more problems with the cemetery and left orders for the community to build or repair walls and gates, install crosses, dig trenches to keep out animals, burn the vegetation, and in general take better care of their dead. By examining a sample of parishes representative of Padua's geographic, economic, and demographic variety, it becomes clear that lay and parochial conceptions of the proper use of the cemetery, more than financial concerns or the influence of individual priests, determined whether or not the Church's attempted reform of the cemeteries would succeed (though money and individual priorities did play a role).

This representative sample of twenty rural parishes demonstrates that Barbarigo was sometimes able to come to an accord with the laity and parochial clergy, but that parishes resisted his attempts at least as often as they acquiesced. Eight parishes experienced partial or complete improvement, either being declared "ad formam" or having a much shorter list of things to correct by Barbarigo's final visit. Eight more remained stagnant, failing to implement Barbarigo's orders but also not deteriorating further. For example, the village of Carre was ordered to install a cross and gate, burn the grass, and keep out animals in 1675.[34] In 1688, they had still not installed the cross and there were still animals in the cemetery. It seems that they had built a gate, but in the meantime, the wall had begun to crumble. This gave the animals a new way in, and they were ordered to fulfill the earlier mandates and repair the wall.[35] Although

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[34] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 45, fol. 147r.
[35] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 461r.

they had made some effort to follow Barbarigo's orders, they had not executed all of them and clearly did not prioritize cemetery maintenance. Others among this group of eight parishes simply ignored the bishop's orders each time, perhaps for reasons of disinterest or poverty. Finally, only four of the twenty parishes discussed here were described as worse off during Barbarigo's final visit. In one village, Barbarigo initially ordered the installation of a cross; by the second visit eleven years later, it seems they had done it, as their cemetery was declared "ad formam."[36] But then things deteriorated. Four years later, they were ordered to make the wall completely enclose the cemetery.[37] Perhaps it had never been complete, but it seems more likely that it had been damaged, as Barbarigo had never mentioned it before. Finally, a decade later, the priest received a long list of orders. The wall was still incomplete, animals were in the cemetery, and people were being buried under the public path that cut through the cemetery, which meant villagers were walking on graves.[38] None of this was acceptable to the bishop, but the villagers saw no problems with their treatment of the cemetery.

Most clergy and parishioners were simply disinterested in this particular reform, and thus chose to ignore Barbarigo's orders; at best they implemented changes slowly and under quiet protest. It is plausible that parish finances and the goals of clergy had some effect on reform, though they are insufficient to explain the widespread nature of the challenge to cemetery reform. On average, the richest parishes were most likely to see improvement, while the poorest were more likely to get worse. The average benefice of the parishes that deteriorated was 185 ducats, of those that improved slightly or stayed the same it was 250 ducats, and of those

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[36] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 38, fol. 347v; and *Visitationes*, b. 47, 170r.
[37] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 52, fol. 324r.
[38] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 62, fol. 25r-v.

declared "ad formam" in the end it was 350 ducats.[39] Poor parishes may have struggled to

finance the required wall and cross, but as neither priests nor parishioners commonly used

poverty as an excuse for the poor maintenance of the cemetery (as they did for things like

dilapidated churches, bell towers, and parish houses), it seems likely that this was either not the

reason why they failed to comply with Barbarigo's demands or that the costs for such things was

not high enough to make this a plausible excuse.[40] The individual priorities of parish clergy may

also have played a small role; there was a higher turnover rate of clergy in parishes that

improved, suggesting that older parish priests agreed with their parishioners and were not

interested in pushing cemetery reforms, while their younger colleagues were more open to

change. They may have hoped to impress the bishop or they may have been more open to the

standards of the post-Tridentine Church. Historian Joseph Bergin has noted that clerical behavior

seems to have improved less as a result of episcopal inspection and punishment and more as a

generational shift; priests educated under reforming bishops were socialized to accept reforms,

while many older clerics remained set in their ways.[41] Perhaps the same was true for clerics'

willingness to enforce or enact change within the parish.

　　Finances and an increased willingness of younger clergy to enforce reforms may have

had some impact on how cemeteries were used, but the primary reason for local resistance to

ecclesiastical standards was the completely different views held by residents of the parish and

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[39] The minimum benefice for post-Tridentine clergy was supposed to be 100 ducats, although not all priests in Padua reached this level and Francesco Caffagni has speculated that 70-80 ducats a year would have been sufficient. Sixty percent of clergy in Padua had benefices over 200 ducats per year. Francesco Caffagni, "Clero curato e benefici parrocchiali nella diocesi di Padova. Quadri statistici e linee di tendenza nel XVII secolo," in *Gregorio Barbarigo. Patrizio veneto, vescovo e cardinale nella tarda controriforma*, eds. Liliana Billanovich and Pierantonio Gios (Padua: Istituto per la storia ecclesiastica padovana, 1999), 719-21.

[40] The cost for walls, gates, and crosses is not mentioned in the records, but considering they could all be made of materials that should have been reasonably accessible to rural people, the most significant cost may have been the labor, which parishioners could have donated if they had wanted to maintain the cemetery according to episcopal standards.

[41] Joseph Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France, 1580-1730* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 185.

their reforming bishop and their inability or unwillingness to see the other side of the issue. Even

Barbarigo's vicars, who were - at least in theory - supposed to be on his side, were disinterested

in cemetery reform. For the parishes examined here, vicarial visitation reports are available for

just over half.[42] Of these, only four reports (two of them about the same parish) explicitly

mention problems with the cemetery, while a fifth generically noted that the parish had failed to

fulfill Barbarigo's last set of orders, which had included instructions to improve the cemetery.

Seven of the reports made no mention of problems with the cemetery, in spite of the fact that

other records demonstrate the extreme likelihood that the cemetery was not up to standard.[43]

In attempting to bring all cemeteries into alignment with ecclesiastical expectations,

Barbarigo's greatest challenge was to convince laypeople that their use of the cemetery was

sacrilegious, which proved to be no easy task. There is no indication that Paduans did not respect

or care for their dead; confraternities for the dead were active, masses for the dead were said

frequently, and Barbarigo received plenty of complaints from laypeople whose priests were

failing to perform funereal services the way they wanted. They mourned their dead, provided

them with the best funeral they could afford, and prayed for their souls in purgatory. But in many

towns, it seems that they did not find secular use of the cemetery itself to be disrespectful. As

historian Angelo Torre has noted, conflicts over cemeteries between bishops and parishioners

demonstrate that the cemetery was always a public space, although its specific use might vary,

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[42] Most of the vicar's visitation reports have been lost; all that remains is a series of 184 reports (out of over three thousand that Barbarigo should have received during his career), mostly from 1693-94. They are found in the volume ACVP, *Visitationes Facta Vicar. For. 1580-1756*, b.1, fols. 221r-649v.

[43] The disparity between Barbarigo's evaluations and the vicars' reports is even more striking when the entire range of vicarial reports is considered. Barbarigo noted problems with the cemeteries in 29 of the parishes that have extant vicarial visitation reports. Of these, only the four reports discussed above mentioned cemetery problems (five, if we include the report that was less specific but alluded to the cemetery). In other words, Barbarigo noted problems with the cemeteries in 24 parishes, while the vicars made no mention of these problems.

and that laity found the bishop's attempts to define the space as sacred to be undesirable at best, threatening at worst.[44]

Cemetery use (or misuse, to Barbarigo's mind) varied across the diocese. Some parishes used their cemetery as a social space or public path.[45] Sometimes Barbarigo noticed or was informed by a priest that laymen would stand in the cemetery after services, using the place as a good vantage point to catch a glimpse of the women as they exited the church. As men and women were supposed to sit on opposite sides of the church and use separate doors, standing in the cemetery or churchyard provided village men with a chance to see and perhaps flirt with the women while socializing amongst themselves. These spaces might be an integral part of the social life of the community. On at least one occasion, Barbarigo sent around a decree lamenting that "in nearly all of the villages" men were standing on the path or in the cemetery "to watch the women who pass...making noise before the church and the cemetery, or resting place, where their dead sleep until they rise on Judgment Day."[46] On a more mundane level, cutting through the cemetery may have been the most direct route from one part of the village to another.

Parishioners also made use of the land in cemeteries - although Barbarigo expected them to be barren, the people often saw potential for the space. In many towns, people used it for common pasturing.[47] Particularly in small villages or places still under feudal control (as much of the diocese was), pasture may have been scarce; why not make use of the cemetery? Although the Church considered this offensive to the community's deceased, clearly local clergy and laity did not share this concern. The cemetery's central location in the town also provided some

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[44] Angelo Torre, *Il consumo di devozioni* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 1995), 18.

[45] For examples, see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 33, fol. 426r-428v; *Visitationes*, b. 36, fol. 378v-379r; *Visitationes*, b. 60 fol. 443r-447r.

[46] "Quasi in tutte le ville" "per guardar le donne, che passano...far rumore avanti la chiesa et il cimitero, che vuol dir dormitorio, dove dormono i suoi morti per risvegliassi il giorno di giudici." ACVP, *Visitationes Facta Vicar. For. 1580-1756*, b. 1, fol. 418r.

[47] For examples, see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 33, fol. 301v; *Visitationes*, b. 42, fol. 425v; *Visitationes*, b. 45, fol. 147r.

protection for their animals and perhaps was easier to access than other locations available for

grazing. Towns under feudal control may have also seen their common pastures enclosed by

their lords, leaving commoners with fewer places to graze their livestock. This sort of

pragmatism was also likely behind the decision to cultivate grains in the cemetery.[48] In a town

with little arable land, the ability to grow a little extra wheat could significantly improve farmers'

livelihoods. Finally, in some towns Barbarigo ordered the laity to clear the cemetery of trees and

roses; although the trees could have provided some sort of fruit or nuts, it seems most likely in

these cases that the cultivated plants were intended as decorations rather than economic

investments.[49] But Barbarigo expected a barren space, not a beautiful one.

In every parish he visited, Barbarigo tried indirect and direct methods to convince

laypeople that the cemetery was sacred ground and deserved the same sort of respect as the

parish church itself. As he processed around the church grounds, he included the cemetery in his

walk, visually tying the sacred space together.[50] Then, if he found problems with the cemetery,

he left detailed instructions with the priest, sometimes editorializing with the rhetoric of sacred

and profane to ensure that his point was understood. In the parish of Rivale, he found the

cemetery poorly maintained on four different visits. During the final two visits, as his orders had

not been followed, he expanded upon his normally straightforward mandates. In 1680, he wrote

that they were failing to separate the sacred from the profane as he ordered them to "construct a

fence for the cemetery distinguishing it as a religious space owed reverence."[51] He repeated this

sentiment in 1695 when he explained to the priest that a wall was necessary not only to keep

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[48] For examples, see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 43, fols. 425v-425r and 504v-505r.
[49] For examples, see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 57, fol. 375r; and *Visitationes*, b. 58, fols. 403v-404r.
[50] For an example, see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 33, fol. 294r. This was a common strategy used by Tridentine bishops to help make their point. Luria, *Territories of Grace,* 70.
[51] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 46, fol. 338v.

animals out of the cemetery but also "to separate the sacred from the profane."[52] It seems Barbarigo hoped that his charged language would inspire the priest and his parishioners to fulfill the orders, but that they rejected his distinction between sacred and profane when it came to this particular space.

As Gregorio Barbarigo made the rounds of his diocese and interacted with his flock, he had very specific ideas about sacred space and the behavior appropriate in and around it, which he expected laity to accept without question. Unsurprisingly, laypeople and their local priests often had different ideas about how they could and should use their church and its property. The meanings that people assign to the spaces they use are not simply a matter of what an authority declares that they ought to believe. When laypeople and parish clergy accepted the Church's requirements, the reforms in the hands of a diligent bishop provided parishes with a procedure to enact or enforce desired changes in their towns and a sympathetic authority to which they could appeal as necessary. As long as most residents wanted reasonable decorum at Mass, for example, that was achievable. When laypeople and parish clergy were less enthusiastic about the reforms, or when opinions within a given parish were more significantly divided, the same structure and assistance were made available by reforming bishops, but reforms moved much more slowly as bishops found they had fewer allies. Thus protecting churchyards, parish houses, and other parochial structures was a feasible goal but would require greater diligence on the bishop's part and would proceed much more slowly than certain other reforms. Finally, reforms with which the majority of clergy and parishioners disagreed could at best start a conversation that might lead to a very slow implementation of reform. The Church's decision that a space like the cemetery was sacred and that certain uses of it or behaviors in it were inappropriate or even sacrilegious was not sufficient to make it so for the people who conceived of these spaces in a

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[52] "Muro separari sacrum a profano." ACVP, *Visitationes,* b. 62, fol. 402v.

completely different way. As the Church, through its reforming bishops, sustained a top-down reform strategy that did not leave space for reformers to engage deeply and thoughtfully with the priorities of those they wanted to reform, bishops failed to recognize that their program was stalled precisely because their flocks had strong convictions about their own lives and were not willing to relinquish them. This was not only a challenge for reforms relating to the use or abuse of sacred space; the Church's failure to enlist the cooperation of average Catholics presented the greatest challenge to the entire process of early modern Catholic Reform.

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