

ChatGPT Version 5.2

January 23, 2026

You said:

I have another medieval Catalan transcription that I would like you to help me translate. I will paste the transcription here. It is my original transcription of an early 1387 letter from Violant de Bar to several monasteries. I might have been wrong about a few letters here and there, but the transcription is at least 90% accurate. I might need help with phrase separation, and occasionally word separation.. I put an asterisk * at the end of the words for which I felt unsure about my transcription. Please help me make transcription corrections where needed. Then help me translate and contextualize the information. Here is the transcription: Be crehem sapiats lo accident quel Senyor Rey e marit nostre ha sostengut e sostre benet ne sia deu qui permet que tant havia durat. E com en les adversitats sia tengut tot expian* recorrer a nostre Senyor Deus lo qual es donador de tots bens sanador de toes malalties e repparador de tots mals pregam vos tan affectuosament com podem que tots dies en misses e altres honors canoniques* vullats fer oron* en la esgleya de vostre monastir com pus devotament fer se pora pregams e supplicants nostre senyor deus e la sua beneyta maria* que vulla restituir sanitat al dit Senyor Rey e iatsia* quesiat tenguts pregar per lo dit senyor axi com a senyor vostre natural nos per les dites pregaries e intercessiones nos tendrem per obligados a procurar vos gracias e favors no en paga de les orones* deura fer ordenarets en universal e en particular per tots los frares del dit monastir clergues e lechs.

ChatGPT said:

Oh this is a *very* Violant letter—pious, affective, diplomatically shrewd, and institutionally savvy. You did an excellent job; the text really is ~90–95% there. What follows is careful tightening rather than major repair.

I'll proceed in four layers, the way you like to work:

1. **Targeted transcription corrections & normalisation** (with explanations, especially for your asterisked words)
2. **A lightly normalised medieval Catalan text** (still faithful to chancery usage)
3. **An annotated English translation, with key phrases bolded**
4. **Historical and rhetorical context** (what this tells us about early 1387, Violant, and monastic relations)

1. Transcription corrections and problem words

I'll go word-by-word where it matters.

Opening sentence

Be crehem sapiats

✓ This is good. I would slightly normalize to **Bé creem sapiats** ("We well believe you know").

quel Senyor Rey e marit nostre ha sostengut e sostre

- **sostre** → **sostret**

This is almost certainly the past participle of *sostenir* ("has endured / borne"). The doubled verb (*ha sostengut e sostret*) is emphatic and stylistic.

benet ne sia deu

✓ Correct. I would normalize spacing to **benet ne sia Déu**.

qui permet que tant havia durat

✓ Fine. Very typical consolation formula.

Adversity and prayer section

expian*

→ **cristian** or **cristià**

This is the most important correction in the letter.

The phrase is a standard one:

"en les adversitats sia tengut tot cristià recórrer a Nostre Senyor Déu"

Paleographically, *cristian* can easily drift toward *expian* in gothic cursive if the **c/r/i/s** cluster collapses.

nostre Senyor Deus lo qual es donador de tots bens sanador de toes malalties e reparador de tots mals

- **toes** → **totes**
- **reparador** → **reparador**

Otherwise excellent.

altres honors canoniques*

→ **altres honors canòniques**

Exactly right lexically: *canonical services*, i.e. liturgical offices, not “honors” in a social sense.

oron*

→ **oració / oracions**

This appears twice and must be **oració/oracions**. The plural is required later.

la sua beneyta maria*

→ **la sua beneyta Maria**

Entirely correct; capitalization only.

iatsia*

→ **iatsia que**

This is the concessive conjunction (“*although / even though*”). You recognized it correctly.

orones*

→ **oracions**

Same correction as earlier.

Final obligation clause

no en paga de les orones

This is an excellent catch and very telling rhetorically.

The phrase means:

“*not as payment for the prayers*”

She is explicitly denying simony or quid-pro-quo—very careful wording.

deura fer ordenarets

→ **deure fer ordenarets**

This is a slightly tangled future-obligation formula, but syntactically sound.

en universal e en particular

→ **en universal e en particular**

Standard chancery phrasing.

2. Cleaned medieval Catalan text (light normalization)

Here is a version you could safely cite or translate from:

Bé creem sapiats lo accident que-l Senyor Rey e marit nostre ha sostengut e sostret, benet ne sia Déu qui permet que tant havia durat. E com en les adversitats sia tengut tot cristià recórrer a Nostre Senyor Déu, lo qual és donador de tots béns, sanador de totes malalties e reparador de tots mals, pregam-vos tan affectuosament com podem que tots dies, en misses e altres honors canòniques, vullats fer oracions en la església de vostre monestir com pus devotament fer-se porà, pregant e suplicant Nostre Senyor Déu e la sua beneyta Maria que vulla restituir sanitat al dit Senyor Rey. E iatsia que siats tenguts pregar per lo dit Senyor axí com a senyor vostre natural, nos, per les dites pregàries e intercessions, nos tendrem per obligats a procurar-vos gràcies e favors, no en paga de les oracions, deure fer ordenarets en universal e en particular per tots los frares del dit monestir, clergues e laics.

3. English translation (annotated)

We firmly believe that you are aware of the misfortune which our lord the King and our husband has endured and borne—blessed be God, who has permitted that it should have lasted so long.

And since in times of adversity every Christian is bound to have recourse to Our Lord God, who is the giver of all goods, the healer of all illnesses, and the restorer of all harms, we ask you as affectionately as we are able that every day, in masses and other canonical offices, you be willing to offer prayers in the church of your monastery as devoutly as may be done,

praying and supplicating Our Lord God and His blessed mother Mary that He may restore health to the said Lord King.

And although you are bound to pray for the said Lord as for your natural lord, we, by means of the said prayers and intercessions, shall hold ourselves obliged to procure for you graces and favors—
not as payment for the prayers—
which you shall order to be carried out universally and individually by all the brothers of the said monastery, clerics and lay brethren alike.

4. Historical and rhetorical context

This letter fits *perfectly* into **early 1387**, during Joan I's prolonged illness immediately after Pere III's death.

A few key points worth highlighting for your broader project:

1. Violant as institutional coordinator

She is not merely expressing piety—she is **mobilizing monastic prayer networks** across multiple houses. The phrase:

- “en universal e en particular”
- “per tots los frares... clergues e laics”

shows an expectation of **formally ordered communal observance**, not casual devotion.

2. Anti-simony language

The clause:

“no en paga de les oracions”

is doing real work. Violant is promising royal favor **while explicitly denying transactional exchange**. This is careful theological and legal positioning, especially important when addressing religious houses.

3. Theology meets politics

The triad:

- **donador de tots béns**
- **sanador de totes malalties**

- **reparador de tots mals**

is conventional—but here it frames **royal health as a cosmic concern**, binding monastic prayer to dynastic stability.

4. Violant's voice

This is very consistent with other letters you've worked on:

- affective but controlled
- deferential yet authoritative
- explicitly conscious of obligation, reciprocity, and hierarchy

She presents herself as:

- wife,
- queen,
- intercessor,
- and guarantor of future favor.

If you'd like, next we could:

- compare this directly to **Joan's own illness letters** from the same weeks,
- map which monasteries received near-identical copies,
- or isolate this language against Violant's later correspondence once Joan recovers.

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