



2016.068
Unidentified Artist
Jesus, Mary and Joseph
Peru, Cuzco
Ca. 1700-1750
Oil on canvas, 37 1/8 x 32 7/8 inches

The poses of the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child, the style of painting and the application of gilding are very similar to those in another work in the Thoma Collection (2014.069). Though the two paintings are not by the same hand, they might have been created in the same workshop. The figures of the Virgin and Child are based on the same model, and the delicate treatment of the gold *brocateado* (“brocade”) is very similar. Representations of the Nursing Madonna were enormously popular throughout the Viceroyalty of Peru. The painting in the Thoma Collection is a very refined example of a composition that was also frequently painted by less able artists whose production fueled the active art market centered in Cuzco. A relevant comparison to the Thoma painting is found, in duplicate, on a canvas with representations as well of Christ as the Man of Sorrows (*Ecce Homo*) and an image of the Virgin perhaps intended to represent the Immaculate Conception (fig. 1ⁱ).

The design of the floral frames around the individual subjects is organized so that the canvas could be cut into four separate paintings. No extra canvas would be needed in order for the separated paintings to be glued directly onto the surface of the stretchers, and irregularities would be covered by the inner edges of frames.ⁱⁱ This unique canvas provides a key to our understanding of the dissemination of popular subjects throughout the Viceroyalty of Peru and, later, of La Plata.



Unidentified Artist, Cuzco, Peru. *Nursing Madonna*. Ca. 1700-1750. Oil with gold on canvas, 36 1/4 x 30 inches, 2014.069.



Fig. 1. Unidentified artist, *Christ, Man of Sorrows, Nursing Madonna, Virgin of the Immaculate Conception*, 18th century, oil on canvas, 104 x 85 cm. Church of the Cross and of Saint Francis of Paola, Uquía, Argentina.

The presence of Saint Joseph in religious art throughout the Catholic world was given impetus following the Council of Trent and was particularly promoted by the Carmelite order. Many of the convents established by Saint Teresa of Ávila in Spain and by her followers in Spanish America were dedicated to Joseph. So, while paintings of the Nursing Madonna maintained their primacy, they came to be accompanied, quite often, by pendants offering images of Saint Joseph with the Christ Child. Alternatively, the figures were brought together in a single composition, as in the Thoma painting, which was called in the eighteenth century, “Jesus, Mary and Joseph,” not “Holy Family,” as is usual today. Some colonial paintings of the three holy figures are precisely inscribed “Jesus, Mary and Joseph,” and this is the way they are identified in inventories.

The model for the Thoma painting could be adapted to include favorite saints, as in this (fig. 2) version the includes the young Saint John the Baptist, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, and Saint Peter Nolasco, founder of the Mercedarian order. Although many of the paintings of this subject have been dated to ca. 1730-50, the date of 1775 on this canvas indicates its continued popularity.



Fig. 2. José de Ojeda, *Jesus, Mary and Joseph with the Young Saint John the Baptist, and Saints Ignatius of Loyola Peter Nolasco*, oil on canvas, 22 ¾ x 19 ½ inches. Archbishop's Palace, Cuzco, Peru. Photo: Raúl Montero Quispe.

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¹ Illustrated in *Pintura cuzqueña*, exh. cat., Museo de Arte de Lima, eds. Luis Eduardo Wuffarden and Ricardo Kusunoki (Lima: Asociación Museo de Arte de Lima—MALI, 2017, 141, fig.120. Photo: IIPC-Tarea.

² In the same church in Uquía is a painting of Saint Ignatius of Loyala signed “Matheo Pizarro.” This had led to the attribution of all the works in that church to Pizarro, though there is no stylistic rationale for doing so.