



Our Lady of the Rosary Offering the Rosary to Saints Dominic of Guzmán and Catherine of Siena
Oil on panel
Early 17th century
29 x 23 ½ inches (73.5 x 60 cm.)

In the center of the composition, framed by the beads of a rosary, the Virgin and Child offer rosaries to Saints Dominic of Guzmán and Catherine of Siena. Behind the saints are groups of male and female figures, both civil and sacred. Two angels crown the Virgin Mary. The rosary beads are joined at intervals by roundels depicting the Joys and Sorrows of Mary. In the upper corners are groups of musical angels, while figures of Faith and Charity rest on the ground at either corner along the bottom of the composition.

The practice of praying with a string of beads called a rosary was widespread throughout Europe and the Americas. Rosary prayers began in the twelfth century, when it was said that the Virgin Mary herself gave the first rosary to Saint Dominic of Guzmán, founder of the Dominican order, with instructions to offer prayers to her. Later, because of her importance to the order and its female branch, Catherine of Siena was often pictured in art alongside Dominic, despite having lived a century later than he. In two works in the Thoma collection (2017.001), the saints are both the recipients of the rosary from the hands of Mary. And both of these paintings date from the early seventeenth century.

The use of a wooden panel as a support, as well as the style of the figures, suggest a date early in the seventeenth century. At that time there was evidence of European influence in the choice of wood as a support, though not many paintings on panel survive. The work attributed to the Italian artist Bernardo Bitti in the Thoma collection is an example, as is a painting of Saints Joachim and Anna in the Colegio de Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo in Lima. The use of wood as a support seems to have fallen out of favor later on, perhaps in part because of a lack of artists from Europe who could teach the elaborate preparations that underlay paintings on wood.

The faces of the figures also indicate an early date. The abbreviated facial characteristics of the angels are especially reminiscent of a pictorial style often seen in late Renaissance/Mannerist prints and drawings. The lips, noses and eyes of the angels are merely suggested with dots of paint, though the figures within the frame of the rosary are more realistically detailed.

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