



2016.002  
Unidentified Artist  
Ecuador, Quito  
*Our Lady of Mercy with Captives*  
Late 18<sup>th</sup> century  
Oil on tin, 8 1/8 x 7 7/8 inches



Fig. 1. Unidentified artist, *Our Lady of Mercy with Saint Peter Nolasco*, late 18<sup>th</sup> century, oil on canvas, 82 x 72 cm. Museo Nacional del Banco Central del Ecuador, Quito.

The order founded by Saint Peter Nolasco in 1218 as the Order of the Virgin Mary of Mercy of the Redemption of Captives had as its stated purpose the ransom of Christians held by the Moors of North Africa. In the Spanish Americas, the goal of the Mercedarian order was transformed into saving the souls of the indigenous Americans through evangelization. The Mercedarians were present in Quito from the late sixteenth century, and a widespread devotion to Our Lady of Mercy was reflected in numerous works of art during the colonial period.

In the Thoma painting on tin, as in the larger painting of a similar theme at the Museo Nacional del Banco Central del Ecuador (fig. 1), the captives wear bells that would prevent their quiet escape. One figure even wears a manacle attached to a chain. In both paintings, the Christ Child holds a Sacred Heart topped with a cross. In the Thoma painting the Virgin Mary wears the emblem of the order on her breast; the man at the far right wears the emblem on a ribbon, as a scapular. The pastel palette, delicate brushwork, and discrete embellishments with gold in both works suggest the orbit of Manuel de Samaniego y Jaramillo (fl. 1780-1824), who was active and influential in Quito around 1800. However, these paintings are not by the same hand as the faces are quite differently painted.

This painting on tin in the Thoma collection reflects the great number of small works of art created in Quito for private patrons and personal devotion during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt



2020.057

Unidentified artist

*Our Lady of Mercy with Saints*

17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century

Peru

Oil and gold on tin

9 1/16 x 7 7/8 in.

Arms outstretched, Our Lady of Mercy shelters a group of Mercedarian saints beneath her mantle. She is flanked by her parents Saints Anne and Joachim as the members of the Holy Trinity gaze down from heaven. Dressed in a highly embellished version of the Mercedarian habit, the emblem of the Order is visible on the Virgin's chest and those of the saints at her feet. Among them may be notable Mercedarian saints Peter Nolasco, founder of the Order (likely the figure in the red cape), and Raymond Nonnatus, one of the earliest and most prominent members of the Order who, like Nolasco, dedicated himself to the ransom of Christian captives from the Moors. The inscription below, based on a Mercedarian hymn, refers directly to the Mercedarian mission to ransom captives.

The diminutive scale of the work suggests that it was used in private devotion by someone with a strong connection to the Mercedarian order. While the use of copper as a painting surface was common throughout the Americas, particularly in Mexico, this work, like the one above it, is painted on tin.

Kathryn Santner



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