



2019.069

Unidentified Artist

Saint Joseph and the Christ Child

Quito, Ecuador

Oil on canvas, 29 5/16 x 21 5/8 inches

The order of Discalced (Unshod) Carmelites was founded in Spain by Saint Teresa of Ávila, who was devoted to Saint Joseph. She made a major contribution to the dissemination of the veneration of Joseph, the earthly father of Christ, in early modern Europe, and that devotion came to the Spanish Americas especially with the spread of Carmelite foundations. The first convent of Discalced Carmelites was founded in Quito, Ecuador in 1653, and it was followed by another. They are popularly called the “Carmen Bajo” and the “Carmen Alto” (the lower and upper convents) on account of their geographical location in the city. The creation of paintings of Saint Joseph in Quito in the colonial period may have been stimulated by the dedication of the Carmelites, but the popularity of this saint extended far beyond convent walls.

The sweet gestures of both Joseph and the Christ Child underline the affection between the figures. The color palette contrasts markedly with bold blues and red and glittering gold of contemporary versions of this subject created in Cuzco.

Nearly unique to Quito painting of the period is the application of a painted framework in elaborate rococo style, which is based on the dissemination of engravings produced by the Klauber family (fig. 1). The Jesuits of Quito seem to have acquired and distributed Klauber engravings, both narrative and decorative, in far greater numbers than the engravings made their way to other artistic centers in Spanish America. The evidence for this generalization lies in the paintings themselves, for Quiteño paintings often reflect contact with Klauber designs, but they are rarely seen in paintings created elsewhere in Spanish America.



Fig. 1. Johann Sebastian Klauber and Johann Baptist Klauber, one of 2 plates from a suite of 4 cartouches with the elements, German, 1745-1765, etching and engraving, 32.1 x 30.2 cm (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, E.1844-1948)



2019.081

Unidentified Artist

Saint Joseph Crowned by an Angel

Quito, Ecuador

Late 18th century

Oil on canvas, 33 1/16 inches x 24 inches

Saint Joseph gently embraces the Christ Child, who rests on a cushion on a table. The figures are placed on a shallow platform. To the left, a small angel holds Saint Joseph's distinctive symbol of his virginity, a flowering rod. Above, to the right, an angel hovers, waiting to bestow an imperial crown on the saint. The soft tonalities and gentle spirit of this composition are characteristic of Quiteño painting of the eighteenth century.

There are many paintings from colonial Spanish America in which Saint Joseph appears with a crown, from simple compositions like this painting in the Thoma collection, to elaborate depictions of him surrounded by heavenly figures as in a painting by Gaspar Miguel Berrio (Fig. 2). There are literary sources for the crown that Joseph wears: for example, Jerónimo Gracián's *Summary of the Excellencies of St. Joseph* (1597), where the author refers metaphorically to the crown of Joseph's virginity and chastity, and to Joseph's trials as the jewels of his crown.¹ According to Rev. Joseph Chorpenning OSFS: "Joseph's crown symbolizes variously the heavenly glory which is his inheritance for the 'good works' he performed as Guardian of the Redeemer (cf. the Council of Trent's decree *On Justification*; his royal lineage as a member 'of the house and family of David' (Luke 2:5); and his sharing by marriage in Mary's royal title and privileges."²

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

¹ Joseph F. Chorpenning, O.S.F.S., *Just Man, Husband of Mary, Guardian of Christ: An Anthology of Readings from Jerónimo Gracián's Summary of the Excellencies of St. Joseph* (1597)(Philadelphia, PA: Saint Joseph's University Press, 1993), p. 200.

² Quoted from Chorpenning 2023 Christmas Message



Fig. 2. Gaspar Miguel Berrio, *The Patronage of Saint Joseph*, 1739, oil on canvas, 77 ¼ x 99 ½ inches. Museo de la Casa Nacional de la Moneda, Potosí, Bolivia. Photo: Antonio Suárez Wiese.