



Piarist Book of Hours

Considered by many to be the finest example of an international Gothic Book of Hours in Spain. The *Piarist Book of Hours* was probably written in the first half of the 15th century and is apparently of Parisian origin. It belongs to the so-called international Gothic style which, according to many, represents a pinnacle of refinement and exquisiteness in the art of European miniatures. Synonymous with luxury and elegance, this style dominated Europe as early as the beginning of the 15th century and immediately all workshops in Europe, from the largest to the smallest, rapidly infecting its best artists.

The page borders are a clear proof of the exceptional richness of our Book of Hours. In fact, absolutely all its pages are bordered with the most widespread decoration and patterns of the Gothic style. In addition to this, there are superb full-page miniatures that cover the complete cycle of a model of illustration that was quite widespread and successful at the time. It also has 213 illuminated initials and another 1,300 smaller but equally embellished ones. And that is not to mention the large number of capitals inside the text, enhanced with soft golden tones, as if to respect the hierarchy of the initials, but which also contribute to give the whole a certain air of solemnity. All this places our copy in a place of honour in the wide range of these beautiful books.

The history of this manuscript is fairly well known, as there is a text at the beginning of the manuscript that narrates it. It belonged to Don Tomás Crespo y Agüero, bishop of Santander and archbishop of Zaragoza, and passed through several hands until it reached Don Juan Antonio de Rosillo who, together with a copious library, donated it in 1867 to the College of Piarist Schools in Saragossa.



Of the iconography, it is worth highlighting folio 13 in which Saint John the Evangelist, is depicted in an excellently executed and extremely beautiful miniature in colour. On folio 15, Saint Luke is depicted, who has the interesting feature of holding a palette of colours in his hand;

these are precisely the colours that he will use in his painting of the Virgin and which are also, fundamentally, those of the miniaturist, the author of the book. On folio 17 is Saint Matthew; on folio 19, Saint Mark; and on folio 21, *The Annunciation*, perhaps the most beautiful page in the volume, the composition and execution of which has the value of a true painting, giving the impression of a reduced altar panel or a diptych sheet rather than a miniature.

Also very interesting is the composition based on rhythmic counterpositions of the miniature with King David, on folio 99, and the coupling of horizontal and diagonal lines and planes in the arrangement of the one on folio 119v, which represents the ceremony of the Office of the Dead. *The Virgin of the Milk* is on folio 167, a beautiful miniature that offers us a charming picture of the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus.

We must also draw attention to the valuable work of translation into Spanish of the original text in Medieval Latin and Old French of the manuscript. This is a meticulous work by Professor Gonzalo Fontana. In this way, the reader will better understand the keys to this book of hours and why such a spectacle of artistic beauty and overflow has been able to emerge around it.

At Siloé we thought it more than appropriate to offer art lovers and bibliophiles a first copy of this fascinating set of books of hours which, as is well known, all represent one of the most dazzling chapters in the history of miniatures. We have chosen this delightful piece, the original of which is kept by the Piarist Fathers of Saragossa, because in addition to belonging to the characteristic international Gothic style, we believe that within it, and in Spain, it is one of its richest exponents. Over time, other movements and other artists will take over and produce other books of hours of almost dizzying beauty. We at Siloé have made a special effort to ensure that the most important artistic movements and their best creations are represented in our increasingly varied and wide-ranging publishing repertoire.

