

Reigle des seurs religieuses et filles de la Vierge [Rule of the Sisters of the Order of the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary (Ordre de l'Annonciade)]; ANONYMOUS, Dialogue between Luke and the Virgin Mary

In French, decorated manuscript on parchment
France, Bourges?, c.1525; additions c.1575-1600

50 folios, preceded by two and followed by three flyleaves, apparently complete (collation i⁸ ii¹⁰ iii-iv⁶ v⁸ vi-vii⁶), written by two distinct hands in brown ink, the first scribe, ff. 1-43 (justification 85 x 53 mm.), in a cursive gothic script [first half of the 16th century], the second scribe, ff. 43-50, no ruling, in an upright and very regular semi-cursive script (late 16th or early 17th century), rubrics in bright red, red paragraph marks, some capitals struck in red, initials painted in red, some passages underlined in red. Bound in a later nineteenth-century binding of dark blue morocco over pasteboard, smooth spine with title-piece "Regle de Relig." and gilt ornaments, frame on boards composed of triple gilt filets, gilt edges, edges and corners rubbed, else in sound condition. Dimensions 105 x 70 mm.

This is a very rare manuscript copy of the Rule of the new Order of the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary (*Ordre de l'Annonciade*) founded by Jeanne de France, once Queen of France, after her repudiation by King Louis XII. Its exemplar may have been the first known imprint (Toulouse, 1529) or another manuscript. Each professed nun of the Order owned a copy of the Rule for her own edification. The appended fictitious dialogue between Mary and Luke, notable for its vivacious tone, is certainly worthy of an edition.

PROVENANCE

1. Almost certainly copied in a monastic environment tied to one of the monasteries of the Order of the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary (*Ordre de l'Annonciade*). We do not know for which "*soeur ancelle*" this Rule was copied, nor to which monastery the first owner belonged. Because the Rule is in French, it seems likely that it is one of the French foundations, of which there were more and more as the sixteenth century progressed.
2. There are a number of seventeenth-century ownership inscriptions on the last leaf (f. 50v and first back flyleaf). The first is dated 1601 and relates to a recently professed nun (*ancelle*), the second is dated 1621. A few words in Flemish are found on the recto of the first back flyleaf.
3. Continental private collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-2, [Rule of the Sisters of the Order of the Annonciade, Prologue, rubric], *Sensieult la reigle des seurs religieuses et filles de la vierge... transsumptee par la court spirituelle de bourges*; incipit, "A tous ceulx qui ces presentes lettres verront l'official de bourges salut en nostre seigneur nous vous donnons a cognoistre et faisons a scavoir..."; explicit, "... Lesquelles nous ont esté exhibées et presentées de la partie des religieuses mere ancelle et seurs nommées de la benoicte vierge marie annuciade de ceste cité de bourges soubz ceste manière et forme";

ff. 2-5, [Papal Brief of Pope Leo X, dated 25 July 1517, confirming the Rule of the Order of the

Annonciade (granted in fact on 22 May 1515)], rubric, *Cy commence la bulle de la reigle des seurs et de la vierge Marie*; incipit, "Leon evesque serviteur des serviteurs de dieu a noz bien aimées filles en Jesucrist appellées les meres ancelles et aultres seurs des monasteres en quelque lieu qu'ilz soient de l'ordre de la benoicte vierge marie..." [published Gabriel-Maria, *Declaration de la règle des seurs de la Vierge Marie*, 1529, sig. A 1 verso-A 2; Dony d'Attichy, 1644, pp. 9-12];

ff. 5-9v, [Rule of the Sisters of the Order of the Annonciade, Chapter 1, rubric], *Chapitre premier de la vertu de chasteté de la vierge marie entre les vertus d'icelle premierement remembret en l'evangille. Laquelle vertu les seurs doibvent avoir et selon icelle doibvent en trois manieres imiter et ensuyvre la vierge marie* [published Gabriel-Maria, *Declaration de la règle des seurs de la Vierge Marie*, 1529, A 2-A 2 verso; Dony d'Attichy, 1644, pp. 13-16];

ff. 9v-12v, [Rule of the Sisters of the Order of the Annonciade, Chapter 2, rubric], *Chapitre second de la vertu de la prudence de la vierge marie au second lieu en l'evangille remembree. Laquelle les seurs doibvent avoir et selon icelle en trois manieres yimiter et ensuivre la vierge marie* [published Gabriel-Maria, *Declaration de la règle des seurs de la Vierge Marie*, 1529, sig. A3-A3 verso; Dony d'Attichy, 1644, pp. 17-19];

ff. 12v-15v, [Rule of the Sisters of the Order of the Annonciade, Chapter 3, rubric], *Chapitre troisesme de la vertu d'humilité de la vierge marie ou tiers lieu en l'evangille remembree et mise. Laquelle les seurs doibvent avoir et selon icelle en trois manieres yimiter et ensuivre la vierge marie* [published Gabriel-Maria, *Declaration de la règle des seurs de la Vierge Marie*, 1529, sig. A3 verso-A 4; Dony d'Attichy, 1644, pp. 20-22];

ff. 15v-17v, [Rule of the Sisters of the Order of the Annonciade, Chapter 4, rubric], *Chapitre quatriesme de la vertu de la foy de la vierge marie ou quart lieu en l'evangille remembree. Laquelle les seurs doibvent avoir et en laquelle doibvent yimiter et ensuivre en trois manieres la vierge marie* [published Gabriel-Maria, *Declaration de la règle des seurs de la Vierge Marie*, 1529, sig. A4-A4 verso; Dony d'Attichy, 1644, pp. 23-25];

ff. 17v-21v, [Rule of the Sisters of the Order of the Annonciade, Chapter 5, rubric], *Chapitre cinquiesme de la vertu de la devotion ou oraison de la vierge marie au cinqiesme lieu en l'evangille remembree. Laquelle les seurs doibvent avoir et selon icelle en trois manieres yimiter et ensuivre la vierge marie* [published Gabriel-Maria, *Declaration de la règle des seurs de la Vierge Marie*, 1529, sig. A 4 verso-B1 verso; Dony d'Attichy, 1644, pp. 25-29];

ff. 21v-25v, [Rule of the Sisters of the Order of the Annonciade, Chapter 6, rubric], *Chapitre sixiesme de la vertu d'obedience de la vierge marie au sixiesme lieu en l'evangille remembree. Laquelle les seurs doibvent avoir et selon icelle en trois manieres yimiter et ensuivre la vierge marie* [published Gabriel-Maria, *Declaration de la règle des seurs de la Vierge Marie*, 1529, sig. B1 verso-B2 verso; Dony d'Attichy, 1644, pp. 29-33];

ff. 25v-29, [Rule of the Sisters of the Order of the Annonciade, Chapter 7, rubric], *Chapitre septiesme de la vertu de la povreté de la vierge marie ou .vii.e lieu en l'evangille remembree. Laquelle les seurs doivent avoir et selon icelle en trois manieres yimiter et ensuivre en trois manieres la vierge marie* [published Gabriel-Maria, *Declaration de la règle des seurs de la Vierge Marie*, 1529, sig. B2 verso-B3 verso; Dony d'Attichy, 1644, pp. 33-36];

ff. 29-31, [Rule of the Sisters of the Order of the Annonciade, Chapter 8, rubric], *Chapitre .viii.e de la vertu de la patience de la vierge marie ou .viii.e lieu en l'evangille remembree. Laquelle les seurs doibvent avoir et selon icelle en trois manieres doivent ensuivre la vierge marie* [published Gabriel-Maria, *Declaration de la règle des seurs de la Vierge Marie*, 1529, sig. B 3 verso-B 4; Dony d'Attichy, 1644, pp. 37-39];

ff. 31-34v, [Rule of the Sisters of the Order of the Annonciade, Chapter 9, rubric], *Chapitre neufiesme de la vertu de charité ou pitié de la vierge marie au neufiesme lieu en l'evangille remembrée laquelle les seurs doivent avoir et en icelle par trois manieres et ensuivre la vierge marie* [published Gabriel-Maria, *Declaration de la règle des seurs de la Vierge Marie*, 1529, sig. B4-B4 verso; Dony d'Attichy, 1644, pp. 39-43];

ff. 34v-43v, [Rule of the Sisters of the Order of the Annonciade, Chapter 10, rubric], *Chapitre .x.e de la vertu de douleur ou compassion de la vierge marie au xe lieu en l'evangille remembrée laquelle les seurs doivent avoir et selon icelle doivent en trois manieres ymiter et ensuivre la vierge marie. Chapitre .x.e;* explicit, "... donné a Romme a saint Pier l'an de l'incarnation de nostre seigneur mil cinq cens dix et sept le .viii.e des kalendes d'aoust et de nostre pontificat l'an cinquiesme. Explicit"; ending, "En tesmoing de laquelle chose ledict seau de nostre predicte court de bourges aux presentes lettres ou au present publicq instrument a nous ordonné estre mis, donné et fait judiciarement en nostre predicte court de bourges ce lundi neufviesme du mois de novembre en l'an de nostre seigneur mille cinq sens et .xvii. present venerable et honorables hommes maistre Pierre de Piperon, de tresreverende père en Iesucrist et seigneur seigneur [sic] Anthoine de la sainte sacrée eglise romaine du tiltre de sainte Anastasie cardinal de bourges, patriarche et archevesque et d'Aquitaine primal promoteur ou procureur general Louis Grene licenciés es droictz et plusieurs aultres tesmoingtz la estant a refaire appellés especialement et priés"; explicit (rubric), *Fine la regle et le transsumpt de la regle de la vierge marie* [published Gabriel-Maria, *Declaration de la règle des seurs de la Vierge Marie*, 1529, sig. B4 verso-C1; Dony d'Attichy, 1644, pp. 43-47];

ff. 43v-48, [Dialogue between Luke and the Virgin Mary (slightly later c. 1600 hand)], incipit, "Luc. J'ay tousjours desiré de scavoir de vous mere de Ihesus que c'estoit que vous faisiez et comment vous viviés avant que fusses mere de dieu...";

The text begins, "I have always longed to know from you Mother of Jesus what you did and how you led your life before you became Mother of God." The Virgin Mary replies and the text continues as a dialogue between Luke and the Virgin Mary. This text is apparently unpublished and seems to have been composed within the Order of the Annonciade.

ff. 48-50, Contemplative prayers, rubric, *Devote contemplation preparatoire a contempler devant les heures du jour*; incipit, "O mon ame anoblie de l'ymage de dieu rachetée du precieux sang de Ihesu Crist espouse a Dieu..."; explicit, "afin que je puisse dignement servir loer et honorer ton saint nom sans fin. Amen."

This manuscript contains a Rule for the Order of the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary (*Ordre de l'Annonciade*) as well as an appended text, a Dialogue between Luke and Mary (unpublished). The Order of the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary is a contemplative Order founded by Sainte Jeanne de France in 1502 in honor of the Annunciation and the "ten virtues or pleasures" of the Virgin Mary. The founder, Jeanne de France, was the daughter of Louis XI and wife of Louis duc d'Orléans, later King Louis XII. After the annulment of their marriage in 1498 (Louis XII repudiated her), she retired to Bourges and was known as the "*bonne duchesse de Berry*." The Berry region was familiar to Jeanne de France, since she had grown up in the castle of Lignières, not far from Bourges, later home to Catherine d'Amboise and her husband Philibert de Beaujeu. She founded her Order under the patronage of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. The Rule follows the "Ten virtues of the Blessed Virgin," the imitation of which she proposed as the aim of the Order.

Jeanne de France took her own solemn vows as "*mère ancelle*" (*ancelle* was the title given to each

nun) on June 4, 1503 and died soon after in 1505. During her time in Bourges, she was close to certain members of the d'Amboise family, including Georges d'Amboise, archbishop of Rouen and Louis d'Amboise, bishop of Albi, who were both active patrons and protectors of the new order.

The Order was placed under the jurisdiction of the Franciscans, and the Observant Franciscan Gilbert Nicolas, later Gabriel-Maria (c.1464-1532) – confessor and confidant of the “*bonne duchesse*” – was appointed Superior. Gabriel-Maria was entrusted by Jeanne de France (c.1500) to help her draft a Rule for the new order and after composing the Constitutions, Statutes and Rule, he presented them first to Pope Alexander VI (1502). The Rule would be confirmed later by Pope Leo X (1517) and it is this second version that is found in the present manuscript. The Order thrived under the guidance and direction of the Franciscans: there were monasteries founded in Albi (1507), Béthune (1516), Bruges (1517), Rodez (1519) and Bordeaux (1520).

Ten virtues or pleasures of the Virgin Mary were selected from the four Gospels by Jeanne de France and Gabriel-Maria to set the foundations of the ten-fold Rule for the Order: chastity, prudence, humility, faith, devotion, obedience, poverty, patience, charity, and compassion. Jeanne had discovered the virtues of Mary directly in the Gospels: “Fais écrire tout ce qui est écrit en l’evangile que j’ai fait en ce monde, et fais-en une règle, et trouve moyen de la faire approuver par le Saint-Siège apostolique” [Write down all that you find in the Gospels that relates to me and my doings in this world, and make a Rule out of this, and find a way to have it approved by the Holy See] (Bonney, 1937, p. 130).

The end of the fifteenth century was characterized by the development of Marian devotions and mysticism, and the Valois family was particularly sensitive to the figure of the Virgin Mary: Louis XI, Jeanne’s father, organized processions, and Charlotte de Savoie founded convents of Poor Clares dedicated to the Ave Maria. Jeanne would privilege the imitation of the Virgin Mary as the basis of her spirituality and she chose the ten virtues or pleasures (*dix vertus ou plaisirs*) of the Virgin Mary as the bedrock for the Rule organized in ten chapters. These virtues were: chastity, faith, prudence, humility, poverty, obedience, patience, gratitude, mercifulness and compassion. One of the symbols of the Order of the Annonciade was the rosary (*chapelet*) that allowed one to string through the ten virtues of the Virgin Mary and meditate on each of them in turn (H. Jacobs, “L’intuition spirituelle de Jeanne de France” in Dinet et al. ed. 2004, pp. 79-87).

The Rule for the new Order apparently first circulated in manuscript form as the new monasteries were created: we have not found another manuscript of the single Rule in public collections. In 1529 a first imprint of the Rule was published in Toulouse (see copy Paris, BnF, Res.-Ld69 BIS-4 (1)), followed by seventeenth-century editions (Bordeaux, 1618; Paris, 1644). A Flemish translation of the Rule was published under the title “*Regel den Annutiaten*” (Louvain, 1614).

The small, portable format of this copy of the Rule is noteworthy and allowed for easy transportation and reading between convents. The Order spread very rapidly, with a number of nuns tied to two or more convents. Such a Rule would have constituted a useful *vadecum* for the new Order, which spread quickly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We do not know for whom nor in which of these new monasteries the present Rule was produced. It seems likely that it was copied by a woman. It might also come from one of the Franciscan tertiaries who in 1529 were introduced into the Order of the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary by Father Gabriel-Maria: this change of affiliation forced the Tertiaries turned “*Annonciades*” to adopt the present Rule.

This is a very rare manuscript copy of a Rule that is an example of a profoundly feminine monastic normative text. It places the Virgin Mary at the heart of the new Order founded by Jeanne de France, Queen, Duchess and ultimately "mère ancelle."

LITERATURE

Bonnefoy, J.-F. *Chronique de l'Annonciade. Vies de la bienheureuse Jeanne de France et du bienheureux Gabriel-Maria OFM*, Paris, 1937.

Bony, Louis de. *La vie de la reine Jeanne de France, fondatrice des religieuses de l'Annonciade*, Paris, 1684.

Dinet, D., Pierre Moracchini, Marie-Emmanuel Portebos ed. *Jeanne de France et l'Annonciade : Actes du colloque international de l'Institut catholique de Paris, 13-14 mars 2002*, Paris, Cerf, 2004.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Annunciade. Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary

<http://www.annonciade.info/>

<http://www.anuncjarki.pl/eng/annunciade.php>

On Jeanne de France

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_of_France,_Duchess_of_Berry

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