

Transumpt of a 1147 papal bull granted to the Collegiate Church of Mary Magdalen in Verdun

In Latin, illuminated document on parchment

France (Verdun, Meuse), dated 1424

Single membrane, written in a cursive bâtarde in 43 lines, with added clerical subscription in 4 lines, clerical insignia at the bottom of the charter, text preceded by an ink drawing highlighted in red tempera, representing Noli me tangere, in very good condition, once folded, with some wear along creases, possibly slightly trimmed at the top. Dimensions 540 x 440 mm.

Illustrated charters are very rare, and always of interest for the study of diplomatics as well as the history of art. This is a particularly fine example depicting one of the most famous events in the life of Mary Magdalene, the “Noli me tangere” (Do not touch me), when Mary meets Jesus on the road after His resurrection. The scene illustrates a legal document for the Collegiate Church of Mary Magdalene in Verdun. There are no drawings whatsoever extant from fifteenth-century Verdun, with the result that this one – a very early watercolor – with its rare date of 1424, is of capital importance for the history of art.

PROVENANCE

1. Charter dated 1424, written and illuminated in Verdun in France, very likely at the collegiate church of St. Mary Magdalene in Verdun.

The Collegiate Church of Mary Magdalena was founded towards the end of the tenth century in Verdun and was run by canons who belonged to the diocese of Trier. A cleric invested with papal authority, Gerardus Johannes de Bertono, apposed his insignia and his subscription at the bottom of the transumpt. There is a possibility that the charter was copied and illustrated in a local scriptorium in or near the Collegiate Church of Mary Magdalena itself. Comparison with other period charters coming from the “chartrier” of the Church of Mary Magdalena will certainly prove instructive.

2. Shelfmark on the verso, “Cotte F”; with a later note in French describing the document and its illustration.

TEXT

Recto, incipit, “In nomine domini Amen. Vniversis et singulis presentes litteras ... Nos Iohannes tinctoris Canonicus et officialis Vindunensis in iudicio ... datum et actum Vindunii in iudicio hora nona de mane ... sub anno domini millesimo quadringetesimo vicesimo quarto ...” [verso, blank except for later notes]. [Transcript of text available].

This monumental charter redacted in Latin is a transumpt (a copy of a legal document, confirming a privilege, granted in the past and thus re-authenticated) of the Papal Bull “Quotiens a nobis” decreed by Pope Eugenius III in 1147, here copied and certified in 1424 by Jean Tinctoris (Teinturier), canon and official of Verdun at the request of Pierre Sansonnet, maître-des-arts as well as Jehan Paumillon and Jacques Henri, both canons of the Collegial Church of Mary Magdalena in Verdun. The confirmed twelfth-century Papal Bull reaffirmed and secured the privileges and possessions of the Collegiate Church. The archives concerning this

Collegiate Church are found in the Archives départementales de la Meuse (Bar-le-Duc), in the series 15 G: the original Papal Bull of 1147 is found under the shelfmark 15 G 1.

ILLUSTRATION

The present document is a fine example of an illuminated charter with figurative elements related to the content, issuer, recipient, or user of the charter. The denomination of the concerned Church, *Ecclesia Collegiata Beate Marie Magdalene* (the Collegiate Church of the Blessed Mary Magdalene) is fittingly recalled in the iconography that prefaces the charter in the upper portion of the sheet of parchment, which illustrates one of the most famous scenes of the life of Mary Magdalene known in medieval iconography as the “*Noli me tangere*” (Touch me not). After his resurrection, Jesus Christ meets Mary on the road, and, according to the Gospel of John (20:17) he tells her “Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren and say to them: I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God.” A particularly poignant detail is the heart-shaped forms suspended in the tree, an obvious allusion to the amorous relationship between Christ and Mary.

Illustrated charters are very rare and always interesting (see the especially useful modern study of the genre, Brunel, 2005). Here the scene is painted in a pale palette, resembling a watercolor drawing. Precisely dated and localized works are critical to the history of art, because they enable scholars to establish a plausible chronology of the evolution of form and style in certain geographic areas. Illuminated transumptu do not appear to be common.

LITERATURE

Brunel, G. *Images du pouvoir royal. Les chartes décorées des Archives nationales. XIIIe-XVe siècle*, Paris, 2005.

Buffet, H.-J. and J. Rigault. *Archives départementales de la Meuse. Répertoire numérique de la série G (clergé séculier)*, Bar-le-Duc, 1943, pp. 14-15.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Archives départementales de la Meuse
<http://archives.meuse.fr/>

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