

Le Louvre des Antiquaires
 2 Place du Palais-Royal
 75001 Paris (France)
 tel. +33 (0)1 42 60 15 58 • fax. +33 (0)1 40 15 00 25
 info@lesenluminures.com

2970 North Lake Shore Drive
 Chicago, IL 60657 (USA)
 tel. +773 929 5986
 fax. +773 528 3976
 chicago@lesenluminures.com

Regula sororum sanctae Clarae [Rule for the Sisters of the Order of the Poor Clares,
 promulgated by Pope Urbanus IV, 18 October 1263]
 In Latin and Dutch, decorated manuscript on parchment
 Belgium (Flanders) or The Netherlands, c. 1475-1500

13 ff., apparently complete (collation: i⁶, ii⁷ (of 8, with ii cancelled, no loss of text)), written in a gothic textualis hand, text in two columns, parchment ruled in brown ink (justification 180 x 130 mm), catchwords, prickings still visible, some capitals touched in red, rubrics alternately underlined in red or copied in red ink, painted initials alternating in red and blue. Contemporary or near-contemporary limp vellum wallet binding, traces of ties (now wanting), inscription in brown ink on the back: "Regel. Regel van S. Clara" (Binding stained, a strip of parchment missing on upper cover, a few wormholes or imperfections to parchment, but nonetheless preserved in its near-contemporary condition). Dimensions 258 x 190 mm.

This modest copy of the thirteenth-century revised "Urbanist" Rule of the Poor Clares was made for a nun in a Netherlandish foundation and survives intact in its original binding. Although the text is by no means rare and has been previously edited, the manuscript witnesses a decisive moment in the history of the Poor Clares and endures as a poignant keepsake of one nun's belongings kept with her in her private cell. Nuns who followed this Rule were sometimes referred to as the "Rich Clares" as opposed to the Poor Clare's, because Urban's Rule allowed them to own property.

PROVENANCE

1. Style of script and linguistic features as revealed in the closing passage redacted in the vernacular confirm this manuscript was made in a Flemish or Dutch environment (Flanders or The Netherlands). The closing formula of this Rule (usually in Latin) has been translated in Dutch: "I sister N. promise God and my Lady Saint Mary, the eternal virgin and Saint Francis and Saint Claire and all the saints, to live under the rules which our Pope Urbanus IV has given our Order and to obey these rules as long as I live, without owning property and in purity and enclosed, as required by the rules." This is a translation of the formula otherwise commonly found in Latin that begins: "Ego soror N. promitto Deo et beatissimae Mariae semper virgini et beato Francisco et beatae Clarae..." (see Omaechevarria, 1993, p. 337). Dating this manuscript is a more difficult task as there are very few decorative elements and the script is a *littera gothica textualis formata* that changed little through the 15th century and well into the 16th century (see examples in G. I. Lieftink, *Manuscripts datés conservés dans les Pays-Bas...*, Planches, Leiden, 1988). The manuscript was clearly used in a Dutch or

Flemish environment, with a 16th or 17th century inscription in Dutch on the lower cover: "Regel van S. Clara."

2. The date inscribed in French on the upper cover (18 octobre 1263) and repeated in the inner flap (anno 1263) refers to the date the papal bull *Beata Clara* was promulgated by Pope Urbanus IV. It is inscribed in pencil, suggesting a later circulation in a francophone milieu.
3. Europe, Private Collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-13v, *Regula sororum sanctae Clarae* [Rule for the Sisters of the Order of the Poor Clares, promulgated by Pope Urbanus IV, 18 Oct. 1263], incipit, "Iohannes miseracione divina sancti nicolai in carcere tulliano dyaconus cardinalis dilectis in christo filiabus universis abbatissis et sororibus inclusis ordinis sancte clare salutem in domino..."; "[...] ut ad instar eius regulam ipsam conscribi pro singulis vobris monasteriis faciat is. Cuius regule tenor hic est. Urbanus episcopus servus servorum dei dilectis in christo filiabus universis abbatissis et sororibus inclusis ordinis sancte clare..."; underlined in red, "Incipit ordo sancte clare..." (fol. 2); rubrics as follow: *De sororibus recipiendis et earum professione* (f. 2v); *De habitu sororum* (f. 3); *Qualiter sorores iacere debeant* (f. 3v); *Qualiter sorores celebrent divinum officium* (f. 4); *A quibus sorores ecclesiastica sacramenta recipiant* (f. 4); *Sequitur eorum exercitio* (f. 5); *De silentio* (f. 5); *De modo loquendi* (f. 5v); *De Jeunio et abstinencia sororum* (f. 6); *De infirmis sororibus* (f. 6v); *De ostio superiori monasterii et eius officio* (f. 6v); *De rota et eius custodia* (f. 7v); *De ostio inferiori monasterii* (f. 7v); *De locutorio* (f. 8); *De crate et eius custodia* (f. 8); *Quibus et qualiter liceat ingredi monasterium* (f. 8v); *Qualiter servicialis sorores emittantur sequitur* (f. 9v); *Qualiter capellanus et converse sororum vivere debeant* (f. 10); *De procuratore monasterii et eius officio sequitur* (f. 10v); *De abbatissa et eius officio* (f. 10v); *Quod nulla ex sororibus accedat ad romanam curiam* (f. 11v); *De visitatore et eius officio* (f. 12); *De cardinali huius religionis* (f. 13); *Quod regula non negligatur a sororibus* (f. 13v); explicit, "[...] Datum apud urbem veterem [Orvieto] quintodecimo kalendas novembris pontificatus nostri anno .iii. [18 October 1263]" (published in J. H. Sbaralea (ed.), *Bullarium Franciscanum*, II, 509-521);

f. 13v, added passage in Dutch, copied by the same hand: "Ic zuster N. gheloue gode ende miire vrouwen sente marien der eeuweliker maghet sente Fransoyse s. Claren ende allen heleghe te levne onde die regule die onse [...] de paeus urbane de vierde heest ghegheuen onser ordinen te houdene also langhe als ic leve onderhorich te sine sonde eeghin goet ende in suverheden ende besloten na al dien dar die regele ordineeret" [English translation provided above in Provenance].

This manuscript contains a copy of the Rule for the Franciscan Nuns of the Second Order of Saint Francis, or the Poor Clares, promulgated by Pope Urban IV in 1263 and written by Cardinal Protector Gaetano Orsini. It gave permission for the Poor Clares to have property and instituted a new family within the Second Order, the "Urbanistes" who followed the Rule of Urban IV as distinct from the Rule of St. Clare (Clare's *forma vitae*) that was approved by Innocent IV in 1253. This copy was evidently made for monastic use, with a passage added at the end in the vernacular. It was likely the personal copy of a sister from a Flemish or Dutch foundation, most probably "Urbanist" given the nature of the Rule. Noteworthy is the fact Urban's Rule titles the new community the "Order of Saint Clare" for the first time.

The history of the transformation of the various Rules of the Order of the Poor Clares is unusually complex. Saint Clare (Chiara di Favarone, 1193/1194-1253) founded in 1212 at Assisi the Order of the Poor Clares in imitation of the Order of St. Francis with the principal aim of educating poor girls and living according to the Franciscan ideal of utter poverty, admitting no individual or communal possessions. The first foundation was built in a house adjoining the Church of San Damiano in Assisi, which accounts for the first appellation "Damianites." Gregory IX (Ugolino, later elevated to the papal chair in 1227) granted Clare the "privilege of high poverty," a privilege she sought to protect and fought to have recognized her entire existence.

At first the Clarisses were bound by the Rule Ugolino had drawn up in 1218-1219, a rule based largely on the Rule for Benedictine nuns (this is the official "first" Rule of the Second Order, published in *Bullarium Franciscanum*, I, pp. 1-2). Innocent IV had expressed the need to review the Rule in 1245, stressing the dependence of the sisters upon the Order of Friars Minor and making it possible for each convent to possess goods and rents, which greatly dissatisfied Clare as she considered it a betrayal of the Franciscan ideal and the "Privilege of Poverty." In 1253, Clare submitted her own *forma vitae* to Pope Innocent IV. Out of reverence for the dying Saint, Innocent IV gave it his approval on 9 August 1253. When Clare's remains were examined in 1893, the original bull confirming her Rule was found hidden in her clothes (see Oligier, 1912, p. 429). Innocent's Rule was a triumph to Clare: it forbade the holding of any possessions and it bound the Order closely to the Friars. The care and general rule of the nuns posed a problem, as the Brothers of the First Order often resented their obligations towards the sisters of the Second Order.

When Urban IV acceded to the Papacy in 1261 he found between the two Orders a great deal of confusion that he was anxious to dispel. In 1262, Urban issued a bull *Inter personas* in which he ordered the Friars to continue looking after the Poor Clares and their spiritual needs. John Gaetano Orsini, who was the newly appointed protector of the Friars Minor, with the help of Bonaventura, began to draw up the new Rule that Urban hoped would bring a peaceful solution to the problem. The Rule was published on 18 October 1263 and promulgated by the bull *Beata Clara*: it is printed in its final form in Sbaralea (ed.), *Bullarium Franciscanum* II, pp. 509-521. The new Rule was to be accepted by all houses of the Poor Clares in Europe. In this Rule, Urban recognizes that the Friars no longer wished to undertake sole responsibility for the spiritual care of the Clarisses, and he transfers all powers and duties to the cardinal protector. Each house was to have its chaplain, but it was no longer an obligation that the chaplain be drawn from the Order of Friars Minor. Thus the Urbanist Rule of 1263 relieved the Friars of many of their responsibilities but did not entirely sever the links. The Poor Clares had to be content with a compromise that largely left them in charge of managing their own affairs and gave them greater self-governance. The new Rule was sent to all convents, but many Poor Clares refused to follow the Rule because it allowed for common ownership of property for sisters, which went against the original Franciscan ideal so dear to Saint Clare. A distinction thus appeared between the "Rich Clares" or "Urbanists" that followed the present less rigorous Rule of 1263 and the Poor Clares that remained committed to Clare's original Rule of 1253.

Later under the Reform of St. Colette (born 1381, died 1447), the Poor Clares were to reject communal ownership of property and champion a return to Saint Clare's original way of life with its strict vows of poverty. The present Rule comes from a house in the very region where the

Colettines flourished, with twenty-two reformed monasteries in Belgium and The Netherlands in the latter half of the fifteenth century, testifying to the co-existence of the two observances of the Clarisses.

It is always quite moving to handle a monastic Rule, especially one copied for a specific nun, as is the case with the present manuscript, and then handed down to successive sisters. It is common to find mention of such a Rule amongst the "belongings" found in a sister's cell listed in inventories after a sister's death. A Rule, with a few other books, was amongst the few books that were allowed in a sister's cell.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

On the Poor Clares

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poor_Clares

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12251b.htm>

Franciscan Women:

http://franwomen.sbu.edu/franwomen/woman_display.aspx?WID=42&PID=8&Sort=C

Saint Clare's *forma vitae* (1253), English translation

http://www.stanthonyshrine.org/PoorClares/Rule_St_Clare.pdf

Pope Urban IV

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15212a.htm>

The Rule for the Sister of the Order of Saint Clare, in Latin and Portugese

http://www.procasp.org.br/paragrafo_capitulo.php?indice=0&titulo=Regra%20de%20Urbano%20IV&cParagrafo=3239&cCapitulo=59#FvUr%20Pro

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