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ANTONIO GONZÁLEZ VELÁZQUEZ (Madrid, 1723-1794)

*Flos Carmeli. The Apparition of the Carmelite Virgin
to Saint Simon Stock*

1780

Black chalk, sepia ink and grey-brown wash on laid paper
378 x 293 mm

SIGNED

“dibujada por Antonio Velázquez” (in pencil, lower left)

PROVENANCE

Madrid, private collection

LITERATURE

Arnáiz (1999), p.139, cat. no. D46

Saint Simon Stock was undoubtedly one of the leading figures of the Carmelite Order. Born in England in the 13th century, in 1247 he was elected sixth general of the Order and is considered to have transformed it from its original nature as a body of hermits to a mendicant one. However, tradition has it that the most important episode in his life was the apparition to him of the Virgin Mary on 16 July 1251. On that day Simon was praying to her to ask for some sign of protection for the Order, which had been obliged to move from Palestine to Europe. His prayer ran: “Flower of the Carmelites, flowering vine, splendour of the Heavens, fertile, only Virgin, peaceful Mother, unknown to any man, give favours to your Carmelites, Star of the sea.”¹ According to the description in the *Flos sanctorum*, the Virgin appeared in the company of numerous angels: “She came in all her grace wearing the Carmelite habit, her hair loose and an

Imperial Crown on her head.”² In her hands she held a scapular,³ which she gave to Simon Stock as a sign of protection from dangers and with the promise that anyone who died wearing it would not suffer the fires of eternal punishment.

The iconography described in the *Flos sanctorum* is exactly the one depicted in the present drawing.⁴ The Virgin, in the centre, has her hair loose and wears the Imperial crown and the Carmelite habit. She is seated on a platform of clouds with a multitude of small angels around her. Kneeling at her feet is Saint Simon Stock with the scapular given to him by the Virgin above his head, which an angel assists him to put on. The drawing is executed in sepia ink with light, grey-brown washes. The composition is enclosed in a rectangle, outside of which the artist tried out in chalk some of the figures that he subsequently located in the central part. They include studies for some of the small angels and the saint’s hands. At the bottom, also in black



¹ “Flos Carmeli/ Vitis Florigera/ Splendor coeli/ Virgo puerpera/ Singularis y singular/ Mater mitis/ Sed viri nescia/ Carmelitis/ Sto. Propitia/ Stella Maris”. Ribadeneyra (1688), p. 580.

² Ribadeneyra (1688), p. 580.

³ Definition of a scapular in the Oxford English Dictionary: “A symbol of affiliation to an ecclesiastical order, consisting of two strips of cloth hanging down the breast and back and joined across the shoulders.”

⁴ The drawing first published by Arnáiz (1999), p. 139, cat. no. D46.



Fig. 1 Antonio González Velázquez and Manuel Salvador Carmona, *Flos Carmeli. The Apparition of the Carmelite Virgin to Saint Simon Stock*, 1780. Engraving



Fig. 2 Castilian School, 18th century, *The Apparition of the Carmelite Virgin to Saint Simon Stock*. Segovia, convent of the Barefoot Carmelites

chalk, is a faint suggestion of the cartouche with text that would accompany the final engraving, signed inside by the artist, Antonio González Velázquez.

Between 1771 and 1773 González Velázquez embarked on a series of drawings intended for reproduction as a collection of prints to be engraved by Juan Antonio Salvador Carmona (1740-1805). The theme was *The Saints of the Days of the Year* and the publication went on sale at Bayló's bookshop on calle Carretas. Both artists believed that this would be a profitable project but the only engravings printed were the ones for the thirty-one days of January and the first ten days of February.⁵ For his preparatory drawings González Velázquez was inspired by the descriptions in the *Flos sanctorum*, as we see with the present sheet. However, the characteristics of the *Flos Carmeli*, which is larger and later in date – 1780, as stated

on the print – suggests that this drawing was devised more as a devotional image than as part of *The Saints of the Days of the Year*.

Furthermore, there are engravings after this drawing that exactly repeat it but have different accompanying texts (fig. 1).⁶ The one illustrated here indicates that the print reproduces the sculpture on the high altar of the convent of the Shod Carmelites in Segovia, which was a free-standing, 18th century sculpture by the Castilian School (fig. 2). Following the Disentailment of the Monasteries in the 19th century it was taken to the convent of the Barefoot Carmelites in the same city, where it can now be seen on the high altar next to a modern altarpiece.⁷ Beside González Velázquez's name on the print is that of the engraver, Manuel Salvador Carmona (1734-1820), brother of the above-mentioned Juan Antonio and possibly the leading Spanish academic printmaker.⁸

⁵ Arnáiz (1999), pp. 60-61.

⁶ In his book Arnáiz published an engraving from the *Flos Carmeli* accompanied by the text: "Flos Carmeli: Carmelitis dat, Privilegia: Pignore: Sui, Caelestis Scapularis". Arnáiz (1999), p. 150, cat. no. G7.

⁷ There is no documentary evidence to prove that the sculpture reached the convent of the Barefoot Carmelites after the Disentailment. What is known is that there was a serious fire at the convent of the Shod Carmelites in 1861. It may have been at that date that many of its works of art passed to the Barefoot Carmelites. For more details on the fire and the removal of works of art to the Episcopal Palace, see Sánchez Díaz (2007), p. 415.

⁸ On Manuel Salvador Carmona and his long and prolific career, see Carrete Parrondo (1989) and Carderera (2010).

