



Abpincant in pace

Et quis eris qui auctoris tui rison plora  
Sunt quod eris quod es tunc fut ut pcor ora

# ‘The Office of the Dead’: a New Interpretation of the Spes Nostra Painting\*

• MATTHIAS UBL •

Behind the grave Mary and Elizabeth sit on a ... turf seat. Their connection to the Vanitas depiction remains unclear, but compositionally they occupy an important position in the picture.<sup>1</sup> Such was Heller’s succinct description of the Rijksmuseum’s panel by the Master of Spes Nostra in 1976 (fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> This work has also been called ‘a very remarkable painting’ because of its enigmatic iconography,<sup>3</sup> and indeed the Visitation scene in the centre, in the juxtaposition we see here, is unique in the pictorial tradition. We will endeavour to further unravel the meaning and origin of this mysterious iconography.

In the foreground we see an open grave with a half-decomposed corpse lying in it. In the past the crossed bands over the chest have often been interpreted as a stola worn by priests during liturgical acts.<sup>4</sup> However the identification with a stola is not entirely convincing (figs. 2, 3). Given medieval liturgical practice, it is hard to imagine that an important liturgical garment like this – as a rule wider and lavishly embellished – would be placed on the bare skin of a corpse.<sup>5</sup> It seems more likely that the corpse, which until now was considered to be that of a dead priest, should be taken as a symbol for the dead in general and for transience. Two canons regular of St Augustine kneel in prayer on each side of the grave. These clerics, who

*Detail of fig. 1*

had taken monastic vows and lived in a closed community according to the Rule of St Augustine, can be identified by their tonsures and their asymmetrical black fur shoulder capes with the typical tassels.<sup>6</sup> This *almutium*<sup>7</sup> was traditionally worn with the tassels over the right shoulder and in this case over a long white habit with very wide sleeves.<sup>8</sup> The *almutium* is also seen as a reference to the specific monastery to which the monks belonged – the General Chapter of Sion.<sup>9</sup> Based on this, there have been several suggestions as to the house for which the painting could have been made – the Priory of Our Lady of the Visitation, just outside Haarlem,<sup>10</sup> the Mariënpoel Convent near Leiden,<sup>11</sup> the Priory of Our Lady on Mount Sion near Delft with its patron saints Jerome and Augustine,<sup>12</sup> or the Hieronymusdal monastery (also called Lopsen) in Oegstgeest, which was dedicated to St Jerome.<sup>13</sup> The canons on the left are indeed presented by this venerable Church Father, who is accompanied by his attribute, the lion. On the right stands St Augustine holding his attributes – a bishop’s staff and a heart, symbolizing his love for God. Behind the grave there is depicted a meeting of two women, who have traditionally been interpreted as Mary and Elizabeth, seated on a turf bench. After the Angel Gabriel had announced the birth of the Saviour to Mary, she went to visit her

cousin Elizabeth, the elderly mother of the future John the Baptist. Mary greeted her and then Elizabeth's unborn son, who had already recognized the Saviour, leapt in her womb and Elizabeth cried out, 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!' (Luke 1:42). This moment is shown in the painting with Elizabeth's hand on Mary's stomach. In the background – enclosed by a monastery wall, a chapel and another monastery building – there is a peaceful garden. This can best be described by the German word *Paradiesgärtlein*, an enclosed courtyard which at the same time is the symbol of Mary's virginity and also of paradise.<sup>14</sup> While the naked infant Jesus plays with a hobbyhorse, Mary sits on a turf seat under a tree. She holds an apple, the

symbol of the Fall, although in her hand it is a symbol of deliverance from original sin through the birth of Christ. They are in conversation with an angel, who in this context is often assigned an instructive role. Three angels making music sit in the corner of the monastery garden on the left, while two female saints stand on the right.

It is immediately clear from this description that the painting has a complex iconography – an amalgam of familiar and less well known images combined in a surprising and unusual way. Fortunately the inscriptions reveal something of the function of this exceptional painting. The first line under the tombstone, 'Si quis eris qui transieris hoc respice plora' (Who-soever passeth by, behold and lament),

Fig. 1  
MASTER OF  
SPES NOSTRA,  
*Four Canons by an  
Open Grave*, c. 1500.  
Oil on panel,  
88.7 x 104.3 cm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum,  
inv. no. SK-A-2312;  
purchased with the  
support of the  
Vereniging  
Rembrandt.







Fig. 2

JAN VAN EYCK,  
*Funeral Procession  
 in the Churchyard*,  
 bas-de-page from the  
*Très belles Heures  
 de Notre-Dame* (Turin  
*Milan Hours*, c. 1380/  
 1400-56), c. 1424.  
 Parchment,  
 264 x 203 mm. Turin,  
 Palazzo Madama,  
 Museo Civico  
 d'Arte Antica, inv. no.  
 PM 467/M, fol. 116r.

indicates that it must be a memorial tablet. The lettering on the tomb slab, which has been rolled back, reads 'Requiescant in pace' (May they rest in peace). The use of the plural and the assumption that the body was that of a priest gave rise to the view that the body was a symbol of the four canons, who in that case would already be dead.<sup>15</sup> However it is unlikely that the canons would be praying for themselves. If, on the other hand, the body symbolizes the dead in general, the canons are shown here carrying out one of their principal duties – the commemoration of the dead. The function of this memorial scene (which could have been ordered during a patron's lifetime) is self-evident – while the canons here pray for the dead in general they are hoping that after their own deaths they will be commemorated in the same way by future viewers.

The half-decomposed corpse is a symbol for all the dead and at the same time a *memento mori*, a reminder of the transience of earthly existence. This is made clear by the second line under the tomb where 'the deceased' speaks, 'Sum quod eris quod es ipse fui pro me precor ora' (I am what thou shall be, what thou art I have been; pray for me, I beseech thee). The last line paraphrases one of the admonitions in the legend of the 'Three Living and the Three Dead', an allegory on transience and an exhortation to lead a pious life.<sup>16</sup> The latter was particularly important for the living, who by so doing could prepare for their inevitable end and the day of judgement. The outcome of this judgement depended

Fig. 3

MASTER OF MORGAN  
 453 (Paris, France),  
 miniature accompanying  
 the *Office of  
 the Dead*, c. 1425-30.  
 Vellum, 223 x 158 mm.  
 New York, The Pier-  
 pont Morgan Library,  
 ms. M.453, fol. 133v.



among other things on leading a God-fearing life, doing good deeds and praying regularly.

Various attempts have been made to link the scenes at the three levels together. In the light of the overall pictorial programme, the grave scene in the foreground is generally interpreted as a confrontation with death and an exhortation to 'make one think about one's sinfulness and about the worthlessness of the world'.<sup>17</sup> The scenes behind the grave, on the other hand, suggest salvation and are consequently seen as hopeful.<sup>18</sup> The name of convenience that the art historian Godefridus Johannes Hoogewerff gave the unknown painter in 1937 – 'Meester van Spes Nostra' (Master of Our Hope) – has a direct bearing on this.<sup>19</sup> For this reason the central Visitation group was frequently linked with the *Salve Regina*, a hymn to the Virgin that was usually sung at funerals and in which she is invoked as

'our hope'.<sup>20</sup> It is true that the content of the *Salve Regina* is reflected in the painting, but it does not provide a conclusive explanation for the Visitation and the central presence of both Mary and Elizabeth.

Henk van Os consequently linked the Visitation scene with the Magnificat<sup>21</sup> (Luke 1:46-55), Mary's response to Elizabeth's praise during the Visitation. In Latin it begins *Magnificat anima mea Dominum* (My soul doth magnify the Lord). He pointed to the importance of the entire Magnificat text for 'a better understanding of the connection between the background scene and the scene in the foreground'.<sup>22</sup> Mary goes on to say that God is merciful towards those who fear him and that he exalts those who are humble. According to Van Os, the viewer must first be humble in the face of death (in the foreground) to then be elevated spiritually (in the background).

Fig. 4  
MASTER OF JAMES IV  
OF SCOTLAND  
(Flemish), detail  
of the *Visitation*  
miniature from the  
*Spinola Hours*,  
c. 1510-20. Tempera  
colours, gold and  
ink on parchment,  
232 x 167 mm.  
Los Angeles, The  
J. Paul Getty Museum,  
MS. Ludwig IX 18,  
fol. 109v.



As far as we know, the combination of a grave scene, the Visitation and the *Paradiesgärtlein* is unique in art history. The 'seated Visitation' is likewise rare – only one other example could be found<sup>23</sup> – a miniature that opens the Lauds of the Hours of Mary in the Flemish *Spinola Hours* of c. 1510-20 (fig. 4).<sup>24</sup> There are, though, countless portrayals of the Virgin and Child sitting on a turf seat (fig. 5),<sup>25</sup> and also examples of the *Anna selbdritt* (Virgin and Child with St Anne) in the same setting (fig. 6). The latter seem to belong to the same image tradition that inspired the Master of Spes Nostra. The fact that here Elizabeth resembles Anne and, moreover, that she is not obviously pregnant could somewhat undermine the established interpretation.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless we maintain the established interpretation of the scene as a Visitation, because there are other Visitations in which the emphasis lies on the Virgin's

belly and far less on Elizabeth's (figs. 7, 8).<sup>27</sup> In all the images of *Anna selbdritt* we know of to date Mary is portrayed with the child standing or sitting on her lap. An *Anna selbdritt* with a pregnant Virgin would be a novelty.

The question remains as to how a client for the painting in the Rijksmuseum – we may assume that this unusual iconography was the result of a special commission – arrived at such an exceptional image? The answer can most probably be found in a breviary or book of hours – prayer books that contained a complex series of prayers and psalms that had to be recited at different times of the day and the year in a pre-determined order. Whereas breviaries were reserved for the clergy, books of hours, which could differ quite considerably in terms of order and content, were made for pious laymen.<sup>28</sup> They were consequently far less complicated, simpler to use and often,

< Fig. 5  
DIRK BOUTS  
(follower), *The  
Virgin and Child  
Seated on a Turf  
Bench*, second half  
of the fifteenth  
century.  
Oil on panel,  
41.2 x 29.6 cm.  
Enschede,  
Rijksmuseum  
Twenthe, inv. no. 46.  
Photo:  
Rik Klein Gotink.

Fig. 6  
MASTER OF THE  
TIBURTINE SIBYL  
(Netherlandish),  
*Anna selbdritt*,  
1480/82-90.  
Oil on panel,  
38.2 x 24.1 cm.  
Princeton,  
Princeton University  
Art Museum,  
inv. no. 2001-178;  
Museum Purchase,  
Fowler McCormick,  
Class of 1921,  
inv. no. 2001-178.  
Photo:  
Bruce M. White  
© University  
Art Museum/  
Art Resource  
NY/Scala, Florence.







although not necessarily, illuminated.<sup>29</sup> In books of hours the accent lay on the veneration of the Virgin.<sup>30</sup>

An immutable and important part of a 'typical' book of hours was the Office of the Dead (also called the Vigil for the Dead).<sup>31</sup> The Office of the Dead was the only text that was rarely if ever simplified from the text in the breviaries for the clergy.<sup>32</sup> The recitation of the Office of the Dead was an essential part of the medieval burial ceremony and was usually read in the evening and night of someone's death, but in any event before the requiem – the funeral Mass.<sup>33</sup> The Office of the Dead has three hours – Vespers, Matins and Lauds. It consists mainly of psalms, interrupted by shorter texts such as antiphons (responses) and prayers. Vespers begins with five psalms; in

Fig. 7  
MASTER OF THE  
LIFE OF THE VIRGIN  
(Cologne), *The  
Visitation*, c. 1465-75.  
Oil on panel,  
104 x 57.6 cm.  
Rotterdam,  
Museum Boijmans  
Van Beuningen,  
inv. no. 2465.  
Photo: Studio Tromp,  
Rotterdam.

Fig. 8  
HAINAUT,  
*Visitation* miniature  
from a book of  
hours, c. 1450-75.  
Parchment,  
222 x 157 mm.  
The Hague,  
National Library of  
the Netherlands,  
76 F 11, fol. 48v.

*Fig. 9*  
**MASTER OF JAMES IV**  
**OF SCOTLAND**  
 (Flemish), *Funeral*  
*mass miniature*  
 for the Office of  
 the Dead from the  
*Spinola Hours*,  
 c. 1510-20.  
 Tempera colours,  
 gold and ink on  
 parchment,  
 232 x 167 mm.  
 Los Angeles,  
 The J. Paul Getty  
 Museum, ms. Ludwig  
 ix 18, fol. 185.



*Fig. 10*  
**FALSTOF-MASTER**  
 (Rouen?), miniature  
 accompanying *The*  
*Office of the Dead*,  
 c. 1440-50.  
 Parchment,  
 293 x 200 mm.  
 Oxford, Bodleian  
 Library, ms. Auct.  
 d. inf. 2. 11, fol. 188v.

the case of the Office of the Dead these are Psalms 114, 119, 120, 129 and 137, all introduced and concluded with antiphons. These are followed by the Magnificat, the high point of every Vespers, Psalm 145 and three short prayers.<sup>34</sup> The Magnificat is consequently an important part of Vespers and hence of the Office of the Dead.

It follows that the Office of the Dead could be the textual and perhaps also the figurative source of inspiration for the unique combination of scenes in the painting. In books of hours the miniatures for the Office of the Dead often show funerals in churches during the recitation of the office or the funeral mass and funeral scenes in graveyards around a coffin or corpse (figs. 2, 3, 9, 10).<sup>35</sup> Preceding events, like the death-bed, or popular and appropriate scenes



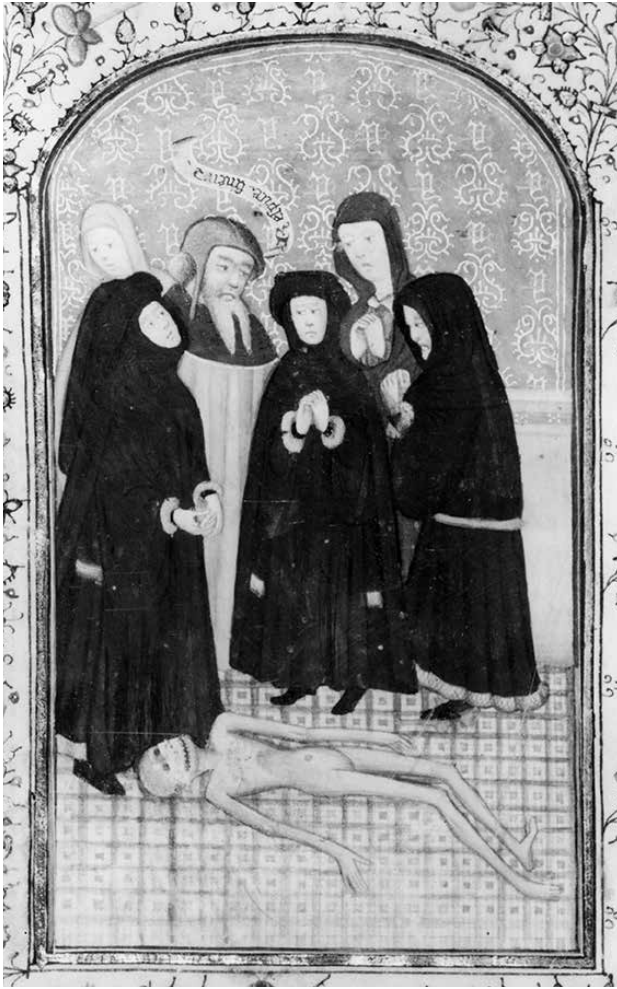


Fig. 11

Painter related to the 'Masters of the Gold Scroll Group' (Bruges), *Men and Women Praying beside a Body*, c. 1430. Vellum, 167 x 123 mm. Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum, ms. w 239, fol. 101v.

from the Old and New Testament, such as Job and Lazarus, were also illustrated.<sup>36</sup> Miniatures with half-decomposed corpses as illustrations for the Office of the Dead are rarer. A miniature probably made in Bruges around 1430 shows a half-decomposed corpse lying on a tiled floor surrounded by mourners (fig. 11).<sup>37</sup> The corpse has been interpreted as the body of someone who had just died, but it makes more sense to see it as a *memento mori* to assist the commemoration of the deceased. Another example is a miniature that accompanies the Office of the Dead in the *Belles Heures du Jean de France, Duc de Berry*, which dates

from around 1405-08/09 (fig. 12).<sup>38</sup> It shows a cemetery with an open grave and two half-decomposed bodies. Behind it sit two monks reading, one on the left and one on the right. A third figure, whose function is as yet unclear, looks on from behind the central memorial cross. What is made abundantly clear here – as in the earlier miniature – is the emphasis on *memoria* (remembrance), not on the Mass.

The function of the Office of the Dead was after all not only restricted to the vigil by priests at the bier, but was an important element of the remembrance of the dead.<sup>39</sup> In the Middle Ages, people's greatest fear

Fig. 12  
 LIMBOURG  
 BROTHERS,  
*Graveyard* miniature  
 for the Office of  
 the Dead from the  
*Très Belles Heures  
 du Jean de France,  
 Duc de Berry,*  
 c. 1405-08/09.  
 Tempera, gold and  
 ink on vellum,  
 238 x 170 mm.  
 New York,  
 Metropolitan  
 Museum  
 (The Cloisters  
 Collection, 1954),  
 inv. no. 54.1.1a, b,  
 fol. 99r.  
 Photo: © 2013  
 The Metropolitan  
 Museum of Art/  
 Art Resource/  
 Scala Florence.



was to die in sin, which damned them to hell for eternity. Given the frailty of human nature it was actually impossible to avoid sinning in life.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless they lived in the hope that they would not end up in hell, but ultimately inherit heavenly paradise. However the deceased still had to wait a long time in purgatory until the day of the Last Judgement, after their souls had been cleansed of sin by the purifying fire.<sup>41</sup> One possible way of shortening this time in purgatory was to read the Office of the Dead for the dear departed, or cause it to be read, preferably daily; the more often it was read, the shorter the time spent in

purgatory and the closer the deceased came to paradise. But prayer not only had advantages for the dead, those who prayed were also performing their Christian duty.<sup>42</sup>

The two miniatures for the Office of the Dead with half-decomposed corpses are comparable to the foreground scene in the Rijksmuseum painting. All three scenes encourage meditation and prayer. The inscriptions in the painting emphasize both the function of the panel as a *memento mori* (with a request to remember the dead and as the contemplation of the transience of life). Here the canons lead the viewer in prayer in the hope

that someone will pray for their salvation after their deaths in exactly the same way. If a believer prays for salvation in front of the painting the circle of those praying around the grave is closed – the border between reality and the painted scene disappears and the fellowship of the living and the dead manifests itself very explicitly. The hope of every believer, alive or dead, of eternal life in a heavenly paradise is made manifest in the scenes in the centre and in the background of the painting.

Against this background it is interesting to return once again to the Office of the Dead, for – as has already been said – the commemoration of the dead has its fixed place here too. For example, one of the short prayers that can end the Vespers of the Office of the Dead<sup>43</sup> reads as follows, ‘O Lord, God of mercies, grant to the soul of thy servant N., the anniversary of whose day of burial we commemorate today, a place of rest, the tranquillity of blessedness and the brilliance of light.’<sup>44</sup> Further on in the Office, during Matins, we encounter a prayer that reads, ‘Incline thine ear to our petitions, O Lord, by which we humbly implore thy mercy, that the soul of thy servant and the souls of thy servants and handmaids, which thou hast commanded to depart from this world, may be received by thee in a country of peace and light, and admitted to the company of thy saints.’<sup>45</sup> These prayers, with small variations, occur frequently and very probably derive from the custom in monastic communities of praying for deceased individuals who had a particular connection with the community.<sup>46</sup> They ask for the deceased what we can in fact see in the painting’s background – a place of tranquillity and the entry into paradise where ‘the brilliance of light’ and the company of the saints await him. We also see two female saints on the right in the *Paradiesgärtlein*. It is unlikely that they were specifically painted because of the reference to



Fig. 13  
JEAN COLOMBE,  
*Visitation*, text  
illustration from  
the *Très riche heures*  
du duc de Berry,  
c. 1485.  
Vellum, 290 x 210 mm.  
Chantilly, Musée  
Condé, MS 65, fol. 59v.  
Photo: © RMN-Grand  
Palais (domaine de  
Chantilly)/René-  
Gabriel Ojéda.

‘the company of saints’, but they are part of the notion of paradise, as are the peacocks, which symbolize eternal life.<sup>47</sup> Eternal life is therefore what the four canons regular around the grave hope for.

The special meaning of the ‘visitation group’ can also be clarified in the light of the Office of the Dead. As we have seen, to date no miniature (or other image) has been found in which such a specific burial scene has been combined with a Visitation.<sup>48</sup> In the Hours of the Virgin, the Visitation generally has its own miniature, usually as the opening of Lauds.<sup>49</sup> In the *Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry* a small Visitation miniature unusually illustrates the Magnificat at



Fig. 14

Attributed to GIOVAN PIETRO BIRAGO (Milan), *Visitation in the upper border decoration from the Office of the Dead (Magnificat) from the Sforza Hours, c. 1490. Parchment, 130 x 95 mm. London, The British Library, Add. ms 34294, vol. 4, fol. 266r.*



the end of the Vespers of the Hours of the Virgin (fig. 13). In the Office of the Dead, however, there is not usually a miniature for the Magnificat; the exception to the rule is a border decoration in the *Sforza Hours*, where a Visitation is depicted at the top (fig. 14). The Magnificat is the high point of Vespers, the evening prayers.<sup>50</sup> It is a reaction to the joyful message of the coming of the saviour, this song of praise was in the Middle Ages considered a key text concerning the incarnation. The Magnificat was also significant in connection with personal devotion because it is written in the first person singular (My soul doth magnify the Lord). It offers the believer the opportunity to

pray in a particularly personal way. This chimes with a reason given in the Middle Ages for singing the Magnificat during Vespers: in a quiet moment, through the Virgin's intercession, people could correct and purify the evil thoughts that had crept into their minds during the fatigues of the day. The prayer was perceived as an example of humility and submissiveness. In this way Vespers encouraged the believer towards self-reflection and the refreshment of the soul.<sup>51</sup> It is this important function of the Magnificat, addressing the individual perception of belief, that is expressed in the central placement of the Visitation in the painting. With the structure of the Office of

the Dead in mind, the grouping of the various subjects in the painting no longer seems mysterious. The panel can be interpreted as a visual (and textual) instruction for the prayers of remembrance. Confronted with the image of the open grave in the foreground the viewer is urged to reflect upon death and transience. There is even a literal request to pray for the salvation of the deceased, with or without the help of the Office of the Dead. The devotions culminate in the Magnificat,<sup>52</sup> Mary's humble hymn of praise to God for the joyful message of the birth of the Saviour, which opens the way to eternal life in paradise.

## NOTES

- \* With thanks to Frits Scholten, Femke Diercks, Stephan Kemperdick, Katrin Dyballa, Christine Seidel and Truus van Bueren.
- 1 'Hinter dem Grab sitzen auf einer ... Rasenbank Maria und Elisabeth. Ihre Beziehung zu der Vanitas-Darstellung bleibt unklar, sie nehmen aber im Bild eine von der Komposition her bedeutendere Stellung ein'. E. Heller, *Das Altniederländische Stifterbild*, Munich 1976, pp. 124-25.
  - 2 For more detailed literature and technical details see J.P. Filedt Kok (ed.), *Early Netherlandish Paintings in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Vol. 1 – Artists born before 1500*, cat. Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) 2009, see <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/research-and-library/early-netherlandish-paintings>; J.P. Filedt Kok, 'Meester van Spes Nostra. Vier kanunniken bij een graf', in F. Lammertse and J. Giltay (eds.), *Vroege Hollanders. Schilderkunst van de late Middeleeuwen*, exh. cat. Rotterdam (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen) 2008, pp. 286-90.
  - 3 G.T.M. Lemmens, 'Schilderkunst in Delft tot 1572', in R.A. Leeuw (ed.), *De Stad Delft. Cultuur en maatschappij tot 1572*, 2 vols., exh. cat. Delft (Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof) 1979, vol. 1, pp. 143-49, esp. p. 147.
  - 4 Filedt Kok 2009, op. cit. (note 2); Filedt Kok 2008, op. cit. (note 2), p. 287; G. van Bueren and W.C.M. Wüstefeld, *Leven na de dood. Gedenken in de late Middeleeuwen*, exh. cat. Utrecht (Museum Catharijneconvent) 1999-2000, p. 206.
  - 5 Priests were usually buried in full canonical dress. See Van Bueren and Wüstefeld, op. cit. (note 4), p. 206. It is more likely that the thin bands, stretched over the shoulders, served to bind the arms to the body.
  - 6 Filedt Kok 2009, op. cit. (note 2); Filedt Kok 2008, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 287, 289, 290, note 9, 10; Van Bueren and Wüstefeld, op. cit. (note 4), p. 206.
  - 7 The *almutium* has nothing to do with a cope, as is sometimes stated.
  - 8 On the clothes of canons and canonesses regular see [http://memo.hum.uu.nl/kloosterkleding/Reguliere\\_kanunniken\\_en\\_kanunnikessen.html](http://memo.hum.uu.nl/kloosterkleding/Reguliere_kanunniken_en_kanunnikessen.html).
  - 9 My thanks to René Lugtigheid, Richard de Beer and Casper Staal for detailed information about the garments that can be seen in this painting.
  - 10 R. van Luttervelt, 'De herkomst van de Meester van de Virgo inter Virigines', *Bulletin Museum Boijmans Rotterdam* 3 (1952), pp. 57-71; J.W. Moerman, 'Het Klooster Sion', in Leeuw (ed.), op. cit. (note 3), vol. 1, p. 65; Filedt Kok 2008, op. cit. (note 2); Filedt Kok 2009 op. cit. (note 2). On the General Chapter of Sion see also E. Ypma, *Het generaal kapittel van Sion. Zijn oorsprong, ontwikkeling en inrichting*, Nijmegen/Utrecht 1949.
  - 10 Van Bueren and Wüstefeld, op. cit. (note 4), p. 206. Here Van Bueren refers to an unpublished dissertation by R. Simons (University of Amsterdam) of 1988.

- 11 J.D. Bangs, *Cornelis Engebrechtsz's Leiden: Studies in Cultural History*, Assen 1979, pp. 23-24; G. van Bueren, 'Herinnering in praktijk. De rol van beeld en geschrift', in J. Deploige et al. (eds.), *Herinnering in geschrift en praktijk in religieuze gemeenschappen uit de Lage Landen, 1000-1500*, Brussels (Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts) 2009, pp. 115-39, esp. pp. 130-32; <http://www.hum.uu.nl/memorie/showWerk.php?werk=1551&&prevpage=memorie/searchFullText> (consulted 17 March 2013); <http://www.cs.uu.nl/research/projects/i-cult/CLE/6Memoria/>. According to a written communication from Truus van Bueren, another monastery, Engelendaal in Leiderdorp near Leiden, is also a possibility.
- 12 Filedt Kok 2009, op. cit. (note 2); Filedt Kok 2008, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 289, 290, note 11; Van Luttervelt, op. cit. (note 9), p. 71.
- 13 Filedt Kok 2009, op. cit. (note 2); Filedt Kok 2008, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 289, 290, notes 9, 11, 12.
- 14 E. Börsch-Supan, 'Garten', in *LCI* (Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie), vol. 2, Freiburg im Breisgau 1970/94, pp. 77-81, esp. p. 78. The *Paradiesgärtlein* derives among other things from the *hortus conclusus*, the enclosed courtyard that is the symbol of Mary's virginity. For a detailed explanation of the iconography of the *Paradiesgärtlein*, see B. Brinkmann and S. Kemperdick, *Deutsche Gemälde im Städel 1300-1500*, Mainz 2002, pp. 93-120. As is the case in countless other works, the garden in this work is not hermetically sealed and also has an open door. Possible symbolic meanings for this are put forward by L.L. Pumplin, 'The Communion of Saints: The Master of the Virgo inter Virgines' Virgin and Child with Saints Catherine, Cecilia, Barbara and Ursula', *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 58 (2010), pp. 306-27, esp. p. 322. But there are other possibilities, including a hymn from the Hours of the Virgin in the Book of Hours of Geert Groote, copy in Huis Bergh in 's-Heerenberg, Hs. 4, fol. 44r: 'Ymnus DOerschinch open waert die poerte cristi veruullet mit volre gracies die coninc gaet doer ende sie bliuet ghesloten als sie was van beghinne.' See [http://cf.hum.uva.nl/dsp/scriptamanent/bml/Geert\\_Groote/HB\\_HS4\\_diplomatisch.pdf](http://cf.hum.uva.nl/dsp/scriptamanent/bml/Geert_Groote/HB_HS4_diplomatisch.pdf).
- 15 Van Bueren and Wüstefeld, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 205-07; Filedt Kok 2008, op. cit. (note 2), p. 287; Filedt Kok 2009, op. cit. (note 2); Van Bueren, op. cit. (note 11), pp. 130-32; T. van Bueren et al., *Memoria in beeld. Middeleeuwse memorievoorstellingen uit Nederland*, <http://www.hum.uu.nl/memorie/index.php>; Utrecht University, *Prayer and Politics*, <http://www.cs.uu.nl/research/projects/i-cult/CLE/6Memoria/>. In this connection the technical research into the panel has led to a hypothesis. The canon on the far right was added at a later stage, very probably by the same painter. The composition of the painting was actually made for three canons: two on the left at the head of the grave and one on the right in front of it. According to Bangs's hypothesis, op. cit. (note 11), pp. 23-24, which was recently accepted and endorsed by Van Bueren, the painting can be associated with the Mariënpoel Convent near Leiden. It may portray four rectors of this convent who died relatively soon after one another: Johannes Crispiani (1496), Gijsbert N. (1496), Gerard Dirksz (1504) and Sebastiaan Fransz (1507). In that case, the memorial scene would then have been commissioned for the first three, and the last rector would have been painted in later.
- 16 J. Sander, 'Meister von Frankfurt. Triptychon mit der Kreuzigung Christi', in J. Sander (ed.), *Niederländische Gemälde im Städel 1400-1550*, Mainz 2002, pp. 368-92, esp. p. 371; M.Q. Smith, 'Drei Lebende und Drei Tote', in *LCI* (Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie), vol. 1, Freiburg im Breisgau 1968, pp. 550-52. Three noblemen out hunting came to a cemetery, where they were cautioned by three dead men to lead a pious life. One of the cautions is the famous sentence, 'Quod fuimus, estis, quod sumus, eritis' (You are what we were. You will be what we are). This sentence can be found in French literature as far back as the thirteenth century.
- 17 H. van Os, 'Master of the Spes Nostra', in H. van Os et al. (eds.), *Netherlandish Art in the Rijksmuseum 1400-1600*, Amsterdam 2000, p. 80, no. 18.
- 18 *Ibid.*; Filedt Kok 2009, op. cit. (note 2); Filedt Kok 2008, op. cit. (note 2), p. 287.
- 19 G.J. Hoogewerff, *De Noord-Nederlandsche Schilderkunst*, 5 vols., The Hague 1936-47, vol. 2 (1937), pp. 278-82.
- 20 H. Schulte Nordholt, 'Meester van de Spes Nostra', *Openbaar Kunstbezit* 7 (1963), p. 35b; Filedt Kok 2009, op. cit. (note 2); Filedt Kok 2008, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 287-88.
- 21 'And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord; 47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; 48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. 49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.'



- 50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. 51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. 53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. 54 He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy. 55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.'
- 22 Van Os, op. cit. (note 17), p. 80.
- 23 Two other examples advanced in the *LCI* (Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie) are problematic. The tympanum of the west gate of the Stiftskirche in Landau/Pfalz is so badly damaged that an exact iconographic interpretation is impossible. It is quite possible that an original *Anna selbdritt* was to be seen there. My thanks to Reverend Gerlinde Wnuck-Schad. The central image group in the high altar in St Martin's Church in Landshut (Lower Bavaria) is a nineteenth-century replacement of the original; it is not known what it originally looked like. See M. Lechner, 'Heimsuchung Mariens', in *LCI* (Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie), vol. 2, Freiburg im Breisgau 1970/94, pp. 239-35, esp. p. 232, no. 4.
- 24 This image is in itself rare because of the presence of Zacharias, Joseph and an angel, but not unconventional (Iconclass 73A6).
- 25 There are numerous examples of this by such artists as Jan van Eyck, Martin Schongauer, Albrecht Dürer and Hans Baldung Grien.
- 26 With thanks to Stephan Kemperdick (curator of Dutch and German Paintings at the Gemäldegalerie Berlin) for this observation.
- 27 The mutual touching of the stomach is not a condition for this iconography; there are also Visitations in which only Elizabeth touches Mary's stomach.
- 28 A book of hours consisted as a rule of basic parts such as a perpetual calendar, the Hours of the Virgin, the seven Penitential Psalms with the Litany of Saints and the Office of the Dead. Also important were the Hours of the Cross and the Hours of the Holy Spirit, the four Gospel Lessons, numerous Suffrages (prayers to the saints) and two prayers to the Virgin (*Obsecro te* and *O intemerata*) along with a variety of other texts. See R.S. Wieck (ed.), *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life*, New York 1988, pp. 27-28; G. Bartz and E. König, 'Die Illustration des Totenoffiziums in Stundenbüchern', in H. Becker et al. (eds.), *Im Angesicht des Todes – Ein interdisziplinäres Kompendium 1*, St. Ottilien 1987, pp. 487-528, esp. p. 492.
- 29 See Wieck, op. cit. (note 28), pp. 27, 124.
- 30 P. Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*, London 1996, pp. 53-54.
- 31 Bartz and König, op. cit. (note 28).
- 32 T.B. Husband, *The Art of Illumination: The Limbourg Brothers and the Belles Heures of Jean de France, Duc de Berry*, exh. cat. Los Angeles (J. Paul Getty Museum)/New York (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2008, p. 164.
- 33 Ibid., p. 164; Wieck, op. cit. (note 28), p. 124.
- 34 Husband, op. cit. (note 32), p. 164.
- 35 For the different illustrations cf. Bartz and König, op. cit. (note 28), pp. 500-16.
- 36 Wieck, op. cit. (note 28), pp. 124-36.
- 37 See Wieck, op. cit. (note 28), p. 125 and cat. no. 87.
- 38 Another example is the miniature for the Office of the Dead from the Book of Hours of René d'Anjou (Angers), c. 1435?-36? Parchment, 175 x 130 mm. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Latin 1156A, fol. 114r. See M.-E. Gautier (ed.), *Splendeur de l'enluminure: Le roi René et les livres*, exh. cat. Angers (Château d'Angers, dans la Galerie de l'Apocalypse) 2009; and H. Grollemund et al., *Les Belles heures du duc de Berry*, exh. cat. Paris (Musée du Louvre) 2012, pp. 207-09, 416, 417. See also the miniature for the Office of the Dead from the Book of Hours of Coutances (Normandy), c. 1450-60. Parchment, 230 x 170 mm. Caen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 320. See S. Balace and A. De Poorter (eds.), *Tussen Hemel en Hel. Sterven in de middeleeuwen, 600-1600*, exh. cat. Brussels 2010, p. 266, no. 80.
- 39 See Koninklijke Bibliotheek Nederland, 'Getijdenboeken', <http://www.kb.nl/bladerboeken/trivulzio/over-het-trivulzio-getijdenboek>.
- 40 Wieck, op. cit. (note 28), p. 126.
- 41 M. Plotzek (ed.) et al., *Ars Vivendi – Ars Moriendi. Die Kunst zu leben. Die Kunst zu sterben, tentoonstelling in het Erzbischöfliches Diözesanmuseum Köln*, Munich 2001, p. 31.
- 42 B. Dekeyzer, 'Ars Moriendi, de kunst van het sterven', in Balace and De Poorter (eds.), op. cit. (note 38), pp. 212-25, esp. p. 216; Van Bueren and Wüstefeld, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 206-07.
- 43 This holds for books of hours that follow the use of Paris. See Bartz and König, op. cit. (note 28), p. 497, note 49.
- 44 'Oratio Deus indulgentiarum, Domine, da anime famuli tui N. cujus anniversarium depositionis diem commemoramus refrigerii sedem, quietis beatitudinem, luminis claritatem.' This prayer comes from *De Belles Heures du Jean de France, Duc de Berry*,

- fol. 102v, for the translation see Husband, op. cit. (note 32), p. 166.
- 45 'Oratio Inclina, Domine, aurem tuam ad preces nostras quibus misericordiam tuam supplices deprecamur ut animam famuli tui et animas famulorum famularumque tuarum qua de hoc/ seculo migrare iussisti in pacis ac lucis regione constituas et sanctorum tuorum jubeas esse consortes.' This prayer comes from *De Belles Heures du Jean de France, Duc de Berry*, fol. 121, for the translation see Husband, op. cit. (note 32), p. 167.
- 46 Bartz and König, op. cit. (note 28), p. 497. Cf. for example also, *Hore beate virginis Marie ad usum Sarum* by Antonio Vêrard, Paris, c. 1503-05. Parchment. Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, inv. no. CMB 19 4°, fols. 139, 153v, <http://www.chd.dk/inc/perg19.html> (consulted 15 December 2012).
- 47 J. Kramer, 'Pfau', in *LCI* (Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie), vol. 3, Freiburg im Breisgau 1971/94, pp. 409-11, esp. pp. 409-10; S. and L. Dittrich, *Lexikon der Tiersymbole. Tiere als Sinnbilder in der Malerei des 14.-17. Jahrhunderts*, Petersburg 2004, p. 348, no. 11A.
- 48 Bartz and König go so far as to say that a Visitation (for the Magnificat) as an opening miniature in the Office of the Dead is impossible. Cf. Bartz and König, op. cit. (note 28), p. 500.
- 49 'Deus in adiutorium meum intende. Domine ad adiuvandam me festina.' (O God, come to my aid. O Lord, hasten to help me. Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.) For text and translation see Husband, op. cit. (note 32), p. 117.
- 50 G. Schwaiger (ed.), *Mönchtum, Orden, Klöster. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Lexikon*, Munich 2003, p. 439.
- 51 M.E. Fassler and R.A. Baltzer (eds.), *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages: Methodology and Source Studies, Regional Developments, Hagiography*, Oxford/New York 2000, pp. 302-03.
- 52 The representation of the Magnificat by means of a Visitation scene is among the exceptions in the image tradition. It is therefore unlikely that the depiction of the Visitation in this memorial scene was a random choice.