

ANTONIO DE TABLADA, *Regla de la orden sagrada de penitencia de la regular observancia de ... sant francisco* [Rule of the holy order of penance of the regular observance of ... Saint Francis]
In Spanish and Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment
Spain (León?, Zamora?), c. 1528-1530

33 folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, top outer recto, 1-33 (collation i^{10} [-5 -7; cancelled with no apparent loss of text; neat stubs remain] ii^8 iii^8 [-2 -3; two leaves lacking with loss of text] iv^{12} [-4; cancelled with no apparent loss of text; neat stub remains]), horizontal (quire i) or slightly diagonal (quires ii-iii) catchwords with decorative frames, lower inner verso, ruled in lead with full-length vertical bounding lines, copied on every other ruled line, prickings visible in upper, lower, and outer margins (justification 177-198 x 132-144 mm.), written in black ink in a very fine formal Iberian Gothic Rotunda bookhand in twenty-eight to thirty-one long lines, red rubrics with black paraps, red paraps, red and black line-fillers, two- to five-line red initials with pen decoration in black and purple, with following word nearly always written in larger, bolder Rotunda script, some of the ink has faded on f. 9, though text remains legible, slight gaps in parchment stitched together in the lower outer corners of ff. 7 and 16, blurred library stamp visible in lower margin of f. 1. ORIGINAL WALLET BINDING of limp parchment, with upper cover continuing in a flap that wraps around the fore-edge, binding straps now lacking, with pattern of holes in the lower cover indicating where these straps may once have been attached, sewn on three white leather thongs laced through slits in the spine and upper and lower covers, inscription in dark ink in cursive on upper cover, "Regla de l[a?] Sagrada orden de penitencia de la N[uestra] S[eraphica] P[adre] S[ant] Francisco," with inscription, "LOC(?) / S," written over it and a year, "1530," noted above it in much smaller script, probable pressmark, "[L? or D?] 18," written on the spine in dark brown ink, a folded fragment from a twelfth-century(?) liturgical manuscript containing musical notation has been used as reinforcement in the fore-edge flap of the upper cover, parchment of binding now stained and slightly curled with a tear over the spine. Dimensions 256-260 x 185-191 mm.

This elegant, well-preserved manuscript, surviving in its original wallet binding, contains a Rule for the Third Order Regular of Franciscans in Spain, issued as a revision of earlier Rules after the Order's privileges were confirmed by papal bull. This is an unedited, and apparently unstudied, text of considerable historical interest, not only for the Rule itself but for the extensive preface that contextualizes its formulation. Although presumably copies of this Rule were made for the houses of the Third Order Regular in sixteenth-century Spain, no other copies are documented to date.

PROVENANCE

1. The style of script and decoration and predominance of Spanish in this manuscript all indicate that it was produced in Spain, no doubt for the use of one of the houses of the Third Order Regular. Prefatory references to Pope Clement VII (*sedit* 1523-1534) as "padre ... moderno" suggest that this book may well have been copied shortly after the formulation of this *Regla* in 1528, while Clement was still pope. In fact, given the formality and elegance of its presentation, it is plausible that this manuscript was produced on the occasion of the *Regla*'s formulation, possibly even in the house where the General Chapter had convened in 1528. The Convent of Santa Maria del Valle, in Benavente, in the province of Zamora and the Diocese of Astorga, was established

around 1392 on the site of an earlier foundation and it was confirmed by Pope Benedict XIII in 1403.

The scribe does not identify himself, but concludes the book with a request for prayers: "Un aue maria por quien la escriuio" (f. 33).

The form of this manuscript's limp parchment binding, with quires attached to the parchment covering with laced-in sewing supports, is typical of late-fifteenth- and sixteenth-century binding practice (see Szirmai, 1999, pp. 311-317).

2. Blurred book stamp on f. 1: "De la Libreria de S(?)... ." Though much of this stamp is illegible, the windmill(?) shown within its central oval might aid in its identification.

TEXT

ff. 1-33, [preface of the *Regla de la orden sagrada de penitencia*], *Ihesus. In dei nomine amen*, incipit, "Nos fray antonio de tablada moderno vissitador general y ministro principal, sieruo de toda la sagrada orden de penitencia de nuestro glorioso padre sant francisco ..."; f. 6, *Comiença la Regla de la orden sagrada de penitencia de la Regular obseruançia de nuestro seraphico padre sant françisco an si para los frayles y monjas que colegialmente biuen en casas y monasterios como para hermitanos biudos continentes conjugados e personas del siglo ...*, incipit, "Capitulo primero de los estados y personas desta sagrada orden de penitencia de la Regular obseruançia. Primeramente ordenamos y establescemos y declaramos ... la qual contiene en si treynta capitulos sin el prohemio y esta nuestra exortaçion en fin della *Gloria patri et filio et spiritui sancto et cetera*. Un aue maria por quien la escriuio"; [f. 33v, blank].

This Rule in Spanish for the Order of Penance, the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, was issued by Fray Antonio de Tablada, Visitor General and chief minister of the Third Order Regular in Castile, León, and Andalusia, at the Order's General Chapter meeting of 1528. Presumably copies of this Rule would have been made for the houses of the Third Order Regular in sixteenth-century Spain, but no other copies are documented. To the best of our knowledge, this Rule has not been printed, much less edited. Some text appears to have been lost in the middle of chapter 12, between ff. 17 and 18, but this copy is otherwise complete.

The Third Order of St. Francis has roots in the Penitential movements of the twelfth and thirteenth century, movements in which Christians voluntarily adopted the life prescribed by the Church for public sinners, including penitence, chastity, simple dress, abstinence and fasting, prayer and works of charity. St. Francis probably did not create the Third Order, but he was himself influenced by the Penitent movements, and encouraged those who adopted it as a way of life, thus recognizing the desire of the laity to embrace some form of the religious life, without entering a monastic or mendicant order. The first rule adopted by the Third Order was the *Memoriale Propositum* (1221-1228), which delineated personal practices, social obligations, and administrative regulations for members of this Order. In 1289, this Order was formally recognized and placed under Franciscan direction when the first Franciscan pope, Nicholas IV (*sedit* 1288-1292), issued a bull, "Supra montem," confirming the Order's Rule.

The lay Franciscan Tertiaries associated with the foundation of the Third Order are distinct from followers of the Third Order Regular, who withdrew from the world and adopted a religious, cloistered life with a governing rule, albeit initially without the traditional three monastic vows. By the fifteenth century, monastic communities identifying themselves as brothers or sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis of Penance, or simply, as the

Brothers and Sisters of Penance, were an important presence in countries throughout Europe, including Spain, Italy, Southern France, Germany, and the Netherlands.

Throughout its history, the Third Order Regular struggled to define itself within the structure of the medieval church; in 1521, Pope Leo X (*sedes* 1513-1521), proposed a new Rule, which defined them as monastic communities, with superiors, living under the customary monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. He also aimed to place all the houses of the Third Order Regular under the supervision of Franciscans of the First Order, the Friars Minor, although this provision does not seem to have been followed everywhere. Following a fifty-five-year conflict over the visitation rights of Friars Minor in secular and regular communities, Fray Antonio de Tablada, Visitor General and chief minister of the Third Order Regular of Castile, León, and Andalusia applied to the Curia in 1526 for a resolution of these controversies. In response, Pope Clement VII (*sedes* 1523-1534) issued the bull "Dum uberes fructus" in the same year, confirming all privileges granted to the Tertiaries of Spain, including the right to elect their own Minister General and their exemption from depending on the administration of the Franciscans of the First Order.

According to this manuscript's preface, on the strength of the privileges confirmed in this bull, this Rule was issued two years later at the next General Chapter gathering of the Franciscans of the Third Order of Spain and Portugal, led by Fray Antonio de Tablada at the convent of Santa Maria del Valle, in the province of Zamora in León. This Rule is divided into thirty chapters, which follow a lengthy preface that establishes the circumstances of its formulation and the appearance and content of the bull "Dum uberes fructus." These chapters cover some of the same ground as the earlier Rules (see above), but, as might be expected in light of Clement VII's bull, they devote considerably more attention to the administration of the Third Order Regular, with several chapters dedicated, for example, to the appointment and powers of the Visitor General.

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