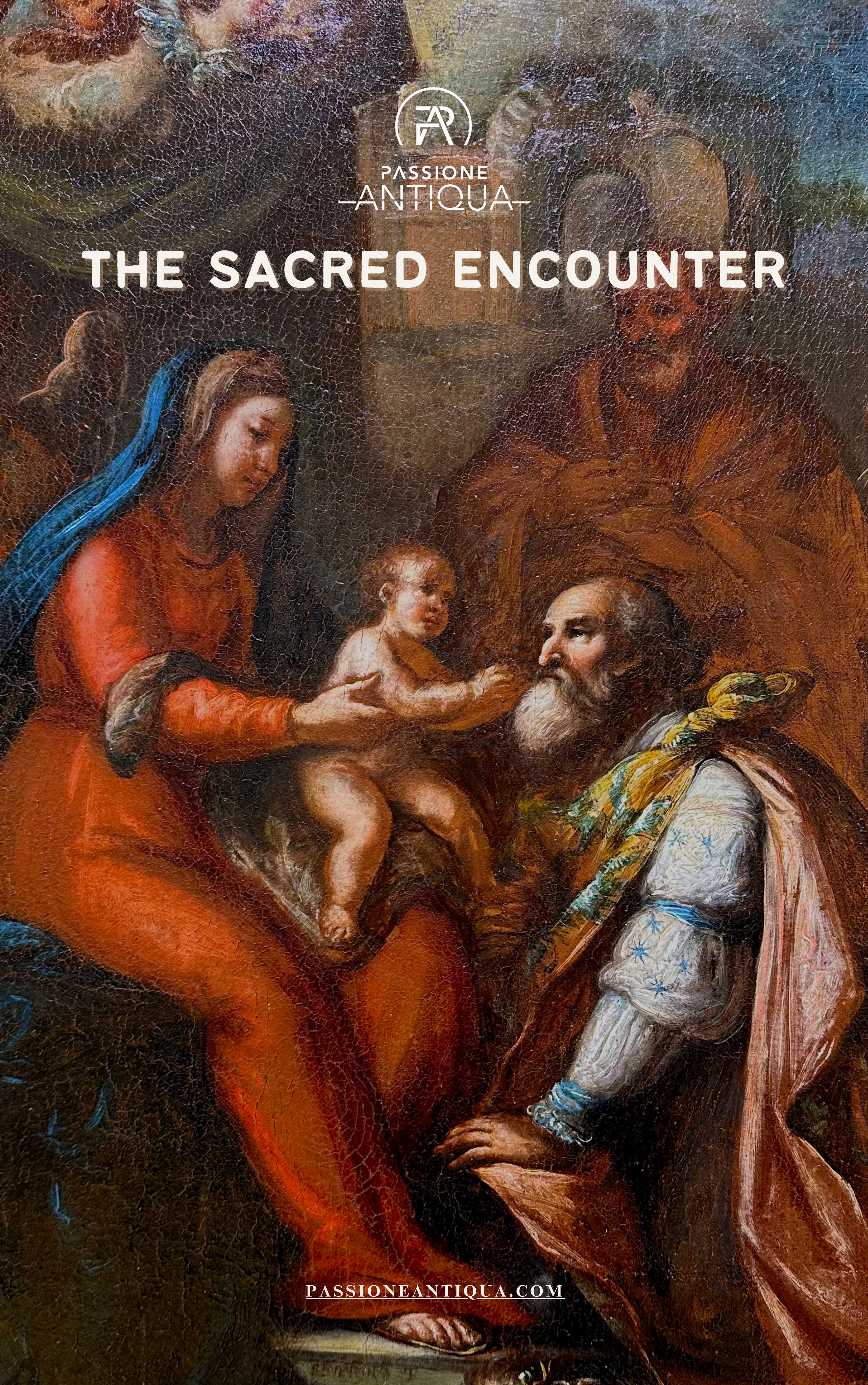




PASSIONE
ANTQUA

THE SACRED ENCOUNTER



The Seventeenth Century

The 1600s was a period of extraordinary artistic ferment in Europe, especially in Italy, where Baroque art developed. This style, whose greatest exponents were undoubtedly Caravaggio, Bernini, and Borromini, is characterized by dynamism, emotion and spectacularity. It is distinguished from all previous art movements by its bold use of light and shadow, its absolute realistic details and its strong emotional intensity. The works of art from this period are charged with symbolism and drama, and the artists succeed in creating extraordinary visual and emotional experiences in which the viewer is almost absorbed.



Oil on canvas *Adoration of the Magi*
Italy 17th Century

Dating precisely from the mid-17th century, this oil on canvas transforms a biblical scene into a fascinating visual experience, thus perfectly embodying Baroque principles. The painting vividly and skillfully depicts the scene of the adoration of the Magi, a popular theme in sacred art of that period as it carries an extremely important message. This moment symbolizes the universality of the salvation brought by Christ, a miracle recognized even by the three wisemen coming from distant lands.



The painting



Now it is time to enter into the painting and analyze it to fully understand its wonder.

On the left side of the canvas, the Virgin Mary, depicted with an expression of serene beatitude, holds her Son in her arms. The Child, with a gesture filled of grace and kindness, reaches out toward the kneeling king, as if to bless him. The posture of this Magus is an example of the virtuosity of the painter, who unfortunately remained anonymous, in capturing the devotion and humility of this man through body language.



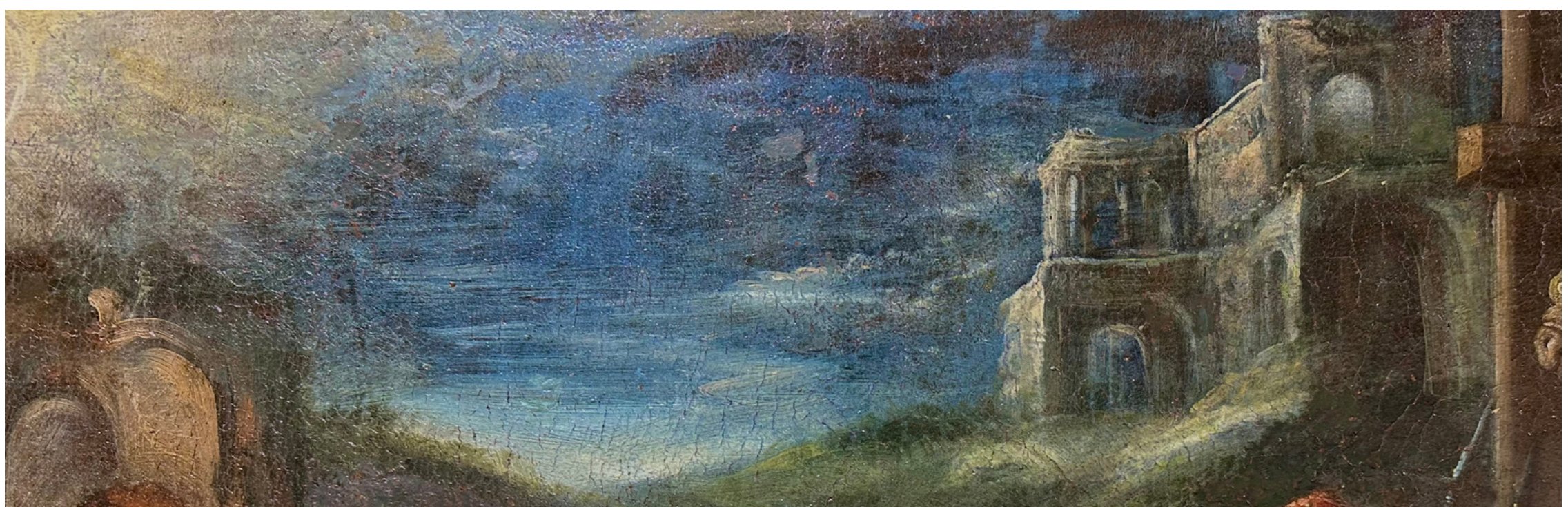
The other two Magi, standing on the right, wait patiently for their turn. They bring with them the famous gifts: gold, incense and myrrh, symbols of royalty, divinity and of the future Passion of the Savior, respectively.



The composition of this painting is a triumph of brilliant colors and skillfully orchestrated lights.



Some angels, singing heavenly melodies, surround the Madonna, while figures of peasants also gather in adoration of Baby Jesus. Returning to the angels, their presence is significant: in Baroque style, they do not simply adorn the scene, but also enhance the sacredness of the moment and guide the viewer to a deeper spiritual involvement.



In the background, the ruins, painted in darker, colder colors, create an evocative contrast to the main scene, which is instead full of warmth and thus hope. This setting of ruins can be interpreted as a symbol of the old pagan era, now faded with the birth of Jesus, who instead inaugurates a new era filled with redemption.



This canvas reflects the drama and theatricality of the Baroque, emphasized by the play of light and shadow and the realism of the details. An interesting feature, in fact, is the use of the ray of light that guides the viewer's eye to the center of the composition, where the sacred encounter takes place. The chiaroscuro technique, as we have said, is dear to Baroque artists and it is used to give depth and volume to the characters, making the figures emerge from the canvas with an almost sculptural realism. The painter does not simply depict a biblical scene but revives it, thus making it tangible and immediate for the viewer.



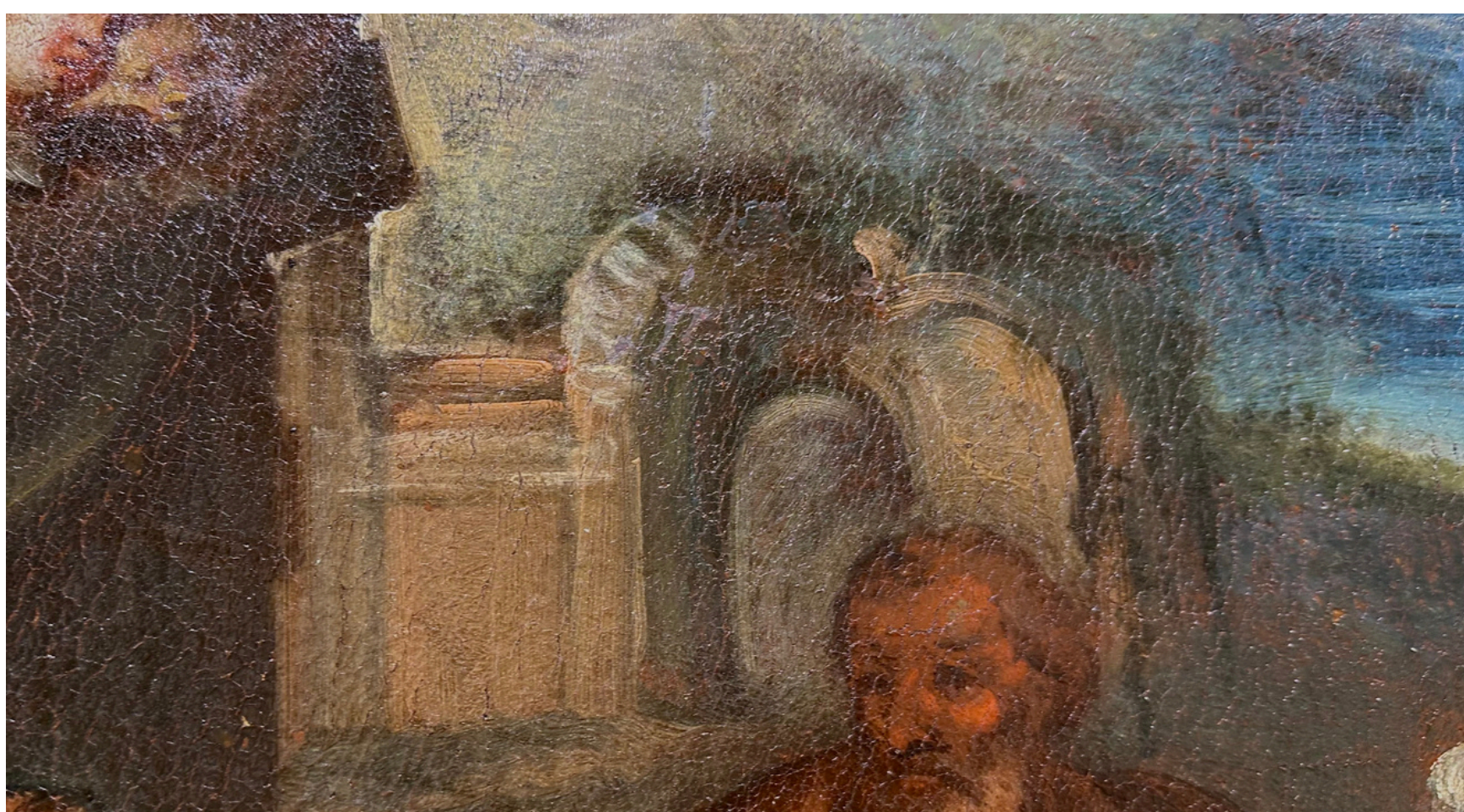
This can be considered a direct quotation of the passage from the Gospel of Matthew that describes the scene painted here, «On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.» (Matthew 2:11).

These words seem to come alive in the canvas, as if the painter wanted to impress them forever with every brushstroke.





Another aspect that deserves attention is the painting technique used. Oil on canvas, compared to tempera or even fresco, allows for greater manipulation of the colors and lights. The skillful use of oil gives the scene great luminosity and depth that inevitably captures the viewer's eye. The brushstrokes, though precise, are charged with expressiveness and really bring to life the fabrics, skin and landscapes, which become almost tangible.



To complete our analysis, we cannot ignore the importance of the historical and cultural context in which this work was created. Indeed, it is important to always remember that art should be read through the eyes of its own time. The 17th century was a time of great change, marked by religious and political conflicts, but also by a fervent cultural awakening.

The Catholic Church, through the Counter-Reformation movement, used art as a propaganda tool to reassert its authority and spread the Christian message. Works like this were used not only to decorate churches, chapels and homes but, more importantly, to educate and inspire the devoted, telling sacred stories with a visual immediacy that words alone could not achieve.



In this extraordinary painting, every detail and nuance of color is an invitation to discover the depth of the artistic tradition of the Italian 17th century, which combined faith and beauty in an incomparable way.

We at **Passione Antiqua** have chosen this marvelous work not only to transport you into the magic of this century, but mainly to wish you all a **peaceful and merry Christmas!**





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Contacts

info@passioneantiqua.com

Viale delle Terme, 151 - 35031 Abano Terme (PD)

Tel e Fax +39 049.8602288

WhatsApp +39 3388299602

@passione_antiqua

www.passioneantiqua.com

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