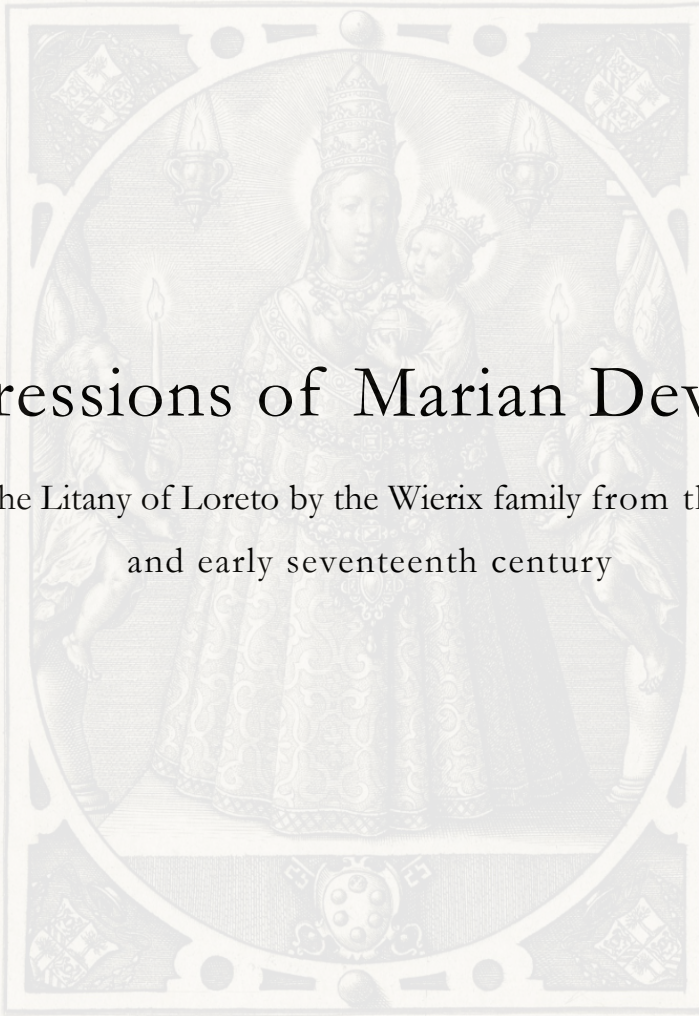


LITANIE QVÆ SINGVLIS DIEBVS SABBATHI ET  
FESTIS B. MARIE CANVNTVR IN S. ÆDE LAVRETANA.

**K**yrrie eleison.  
Christe eleison.  
Christe audi nos:  
Christe exaudi nos.  
Pater de cœlis Deus,  
Miserere nobis.  
Fili redemptor mundi  
Deus, mis. nobis.  
Spiritus sancte Deus,  
miserere nobis.  
Sancta Trinitas vnus  
Deus, mis. nobis.  
Sancta Maria, ora  
pro nobis.  
Sancta Dei genitrix,  
ora pro nobis.  
Sancta Virgo Virg. ora.  
Mater Christi, ora.  
Mater Dni, ora.  
Mater purissima, ora.  
Mater castissima, ora.  
Mater intemerata, ora.  
Mater amabilis, ora.  
Mater admirabilis, ora.  
Mater Creatoris, ora.  
Mater Saluatoris, ora.  
Virgo prudentissima, ora.  
Virgo veneranda, ora.  
Virgo prædicanda, ora.  
Virgo potens, ora.  
Virgo clemens, ora.  
Virgo fidelis, ora.  
Speculum iustitiæ, ora.  
Sedes sapientiæ, ora.  
Causa nostræ lætitiæ, ora.  
Vas spirituale, ora.

O Domina mea, in benedictam fidem,  
ac singularem misericordie tuæ,  
hoïe, et quotidie, hora exitus mei, et animum meam,  
et corpus meum tibi commendo, omnem spem meam, conso-  
lationem meam, omnes angustias et misérias meas, vitam et  
finem vitæ meæ tibi committo: vt per tuam sanctissimam  
intercessionem, et per tua merita, omnia mea dirigantur et dis-  
ponantur opera, secundum tuam, tuusq; filij voluntatem. Amen.



Vas honorabile, ora.  
Vas insigne deuotionis, ora.  
Rosa mystica, ora.  
Turris Dauidica, ora.  
Turris eburnea, ora.  
Domus aurea, ora.  
Fœderis Arca, ora.  
Lanua Cœli, ora.  
Stella matutina, ora.  
Salus infirmorum, ora.  
Refugium peccatorû, ora.  
Consolatrix afflictorû, ora.  
Auxilium Christianorum,  
ora pro nobis.  
Regina Angelorum, ora.  
Regina Patriarchar. ora.  
Regina Prophetar. ora.  
Regina Apostolorû, ora.  
Regina Martyrum, ora.  
Regina Virginum, ora.  
Regina Sacerdotum, ora.  
Regina mûn, ora pro nobis.  
Agnus Dei, qui tollis  
peccata mundi, parce  
nobis Domine.  
Agnus Dei, qui tollis  
peccata mundi, exaudi  
nos Domine.  
Agnus Dei, qui tollis  
peccata mundi,  
miserere nobis.  
Versiculus.  
Angelus Domini  
nunciauit Mariæ,  
et concepit de  
Spiritu sancto.

## Impressions of Marian Devotion

Depictions of the Litany of Loreto by the Wierix family from the late sixteenth  
and early seventeenth century

### OREMVS.

Gratiam tuam quæsumus Domine, mentibus nostris  
infunde, vt qui Angelo nunciante, Christi filij tui  
incarnationem cognouimus, per passionem eius  
et crucem, ad resurrectionis gloriam perducamur.  
Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Defende quæsumus Domine, B. Maria semper  
Virgine intercedente, is tam ab omni aduersitate  
familiam, et toto corde tibi prostratam ab  
hòs tuum propitijs tuere clementer insidijs.  
Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Ill<sup>mo</sup> et R<sup>mo</sup> D. Octauio Frangipano Myrto, Episcopo Trica-  
ricensi, Ecclesiæ Tarentinæ Archiepiscopo designato,  
Nuncio Apostolico per Belgium D.D. Hieron. Wierx ..

by  
Emma Praat

Hieronymus Wierx fecit et excud.

Cum Gratia, et Præuilegio. Buxhere.

# Impressions of Marian Devotion

Depictions of the Litany of Loreto by the Wierix Family from the late sixteenth  
and early seventeenth century

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Master thesis

Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Studies

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Image on the frontispiece: Hieronymus Wierix, *Our Lady of Loreto with prayers*, c. 1605. Engraving on paper, 17.3 x 11.2 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1863,0509.650. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

## Abstract

Six prints by the Antwerp engravers Hieronymus and Antonie (II) Wierix from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century with depictions of the Litany of Loreto offer insight into the Marian devotion of their time, particularly into the cult of the Madonna of Loreto. These prints highlight three primary iconographic types in which the cult of Loreto is often depicted: the Madonna with the Christ Child on a flying house, the Madonna of Loreto as a statue, and symbolic representations of Marian titles from the Litany of Loreto. Especially the iconography of the Litany of Loreto underscores the adaptability of the Loreto cult, demonstrating its integration into diverse religious contexts beyond the Loreto shrine such as in combination with symbols from other Marian litanies and the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception. The prints reflect the religious and political context of their times, most notably the post-1585 Catholic resurgence in Antwerp under Spanish Habsburg rule. Initially Lutheran, the Wierix brothers aligned with Catholic doctrine following the Fall of Antwerp, creating prints that supported Counter-Reformation efforts through universal and accessible religious imagery. The small size of the prints, the Latin texts, and iconographic elements suggest their use for private devotion, possibly influenced by Jesuit practices, the religious order which also plausibly facilitated the spread of these prints across Europe and beyond. While not unique in depicting the Litany of Loreto within the Low Countries and beyond, the prints by the Wierix brothers illustrate the intersection of local and global Catholic practices, attesting to the Loreto cult's resilience and widespread appeal.

## Acknowledgments

Ever since the writing of my bachelor thesis on a fifteenth century panel painting depicting the Madonna, attributed to Lorenzo Monaco, with a description of her miraculous journey across the sea on the verso, I have been fascinated by miraculous Madonnas and saints, which prompted the topic of my master's thesis. In pursuing this project, I have benefitted from the invaluable advice, support and guidance of numerous individuals which I would like to thank here.

First and foremost, I would like to thank dr. Lia Costiner for her support and advice throughout the period I have been working on this thesis. I am very grateful to her for the many conversations and email exchanges about this thesis, the extensive, constructive feedback on my written pieces and the great conversations we had in Florence.

It took me quite a while to get my hands on an original thesis topic and research question. In my search for a miraculous thesis topic, I would like to thank the following people: Ome Cor for several books on the Virgin Mary, Breghtje Dik, Valentijn As, Esmeralda Plompen, dr. Gert-Jan van der Sman, dr. Lieke Wijnia, dr. Richard de Beer, dr. Evelyne Verheggen, prof. dr. Veerle Fraeters, dr. Jeroen Salman, Niels Weijenberg, Philip Muijtens for listening to my ideas and providing feedback. I would like to thank Agata Keran, friar Charles and the staff members of the Ruusbroecgenootschap for the warm welcome and all the information they have provided to me.

Once I arrived at my thesis topic and research question, a number of people helped me tremendously in putting all the pieces together on the prints of the Litany of Loreto by the Wierix family. I am immensely grateful to dr. Erin Giffin for sharing all her knowledge about the Loreto cult with me. I would like to thank Philip Muijtens for his help with Latin translations. Pastor ten Have of the St Francis Parish based in Twello I would like to thank in guiding me through the theological literature on and the use of the Litany of Loreto and showing me the Marian altar with symbols of the Litany of Loreto in Apeldoorn. Caroline Wilms Floet, thank you for introducing me to the pastor. I would also like to thank Charlotte Wytéma very much for her advice concerning the Marian iconography of the Immaculate Conception and fifteen Marian symbols.

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## Table of contents

Abstract .....	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
List of figures.....	9
Introduction.....	13
Italian Miraculous Madonnas .....	14
Global print culture.....	15
Domestic devotion.....	17
Beyond Florence, beyond Italy.....	17
Approaching the Wierix depictions of the Litany of Loreto.....	18
1. Origins and development of the Litany of Loreto .....	19
1.1 Introduction.....	19
1.2. The legend, the sanctuary and the Madonna of Loreto.....	23
1.2.1. The legend of the Holy House of Loreto.....	23
1.2.2. The sanctuary at Loreto and the Madonna of Loreto .....	25
1.3. The Litany of Loreto .....	31
1.3.1. The origins and text of the litany.....	31
1.3.2. The Litany of Loreto in art.....	36
1.4. The miracle-working Madonna and the Litany of Loreto outside of Italy.....	37
1.4.1. The Counter-Reformation and the propaganda of miraculous saints and Madonnas .....	37
1.4.2. England.....	38
1.4.3. Germany .....	39
1.4.4. Low Countries .....	40
1.4.5. Outside of Europe .....	41
1.5. Conclusion .....	42
2. The prints of the Litany of Loreto by the Wierix family.....	43
2.1. Introduction.....	43

2.2. The Wierix family.....	45
2.2.1. Biographical information .....	45
2.2.2. The Wierix brothers at work .....	46
2.2.3. Religious prints .....	48
2.3. The prints .....	50
2.3.1. Print 1: The Annunciation with prayers (among which the Litany of Loreto).....	51
2.3.2. Print 2: Our Lady of Loreto with the symbols of the Litany of Loreto .....	52
2.3.3. Print 3: Our Lady of Loreto with prayers.....	53
2.3.4. Print 4: The Virgin with symbols of the Litany of Loreto.....	54
2.3.5. Print 5: Virgin Mary flanked by symbols of the Litany of Loreto .....	55
2.3.6. Print 6: Virgin Mary flanked by symbols of the Litany of Loreto .....	56
2.3.7. A missing print.....	57
2.4. Comparing and analysing the prints.....	64
2.4.1. Material aspects and signs of usage .....	64
2.4.2. Depictions of the Madonna.....	64
2.4.3. Text of the Litany of Loreto.....	65
2.4.4. Symbols of the Litany of Loreto.....	66
2.4.5. Production of prints.....	67
2.4.6. Provenance .....	67
2.5. The Litany of Loreto within the Wierix oeuvre .....	68
2.6. Conclusion .....	69
3. Distribution, functionality, and the international context of the prints of the Litany of Loreto .....	71
3.1. Introduction .....	71
3.2. Distribution.....	72
3.2.1. Antwerp: international printing centre for devotional Jesuit prints .....	72
3.2.2. Street sellers.....	74
3.2.3. Pilgrimage .....	74
3.2.4. Copies.....	75
3.3. The function of devotional prints in religious devotion.....	81
3.4. Other prints of the Litany of Loreto from the Low Countries .....	87

3.4.1. A print with the text of the Marian litanies .....	87
3.4.2. Prints with the symbols of the Marian litanies .....	89
3.5. Depictions outside of the Low Countries .....	95
3.5.1. Italy .....	95
3.5.2. Austria .....	96
3.5.3. Spain .....	98
3.6. Conclusion .....	104
Conclusion .....	106
General conclusion.....	106
Further research.....	107
Bibliography .....	109
Primary sources.....	109
Secondary sources .....	110
Reference works .....	115
Website content .....	116



## List of figures

**Figure 1.1.** M. Küsell, frontispiece of a first edition of Wilhelm Gumpfenberg's *Atlas Marianus*, 1657. Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek - Th L 254. Image © Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

**Figure 1.2.** Melchior Haffner, frontispiece of a second edition of Wilhelm Gumpfenberg's *Atlas Marianus*, 1672. Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, 2 Th L 32. Image © Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

**Figure 1.3.** Domenichino, *Altarpiece from the Church of San Francesco, Fano: The 'Madonna of Loreto' Appearing to Saints John the Baptist, Eligius, and Anthony Abbot*, c. 1618 —1620. Oil on canvas, 241 x 170.5 cm. North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh. Object number: GL.60.17.51. Image © North Carolina Museum of Art.

**Figure 1.4.** The sanctuary at Loreto seen from above. Image © Santuario Pontificio della Santa Casa di Loreto.

**Figure 1.5.** The Madonna of Loreto inside the Holy House. Basilica of the Holy House, Loreto. Image © Santuario Pontificio della Santa Casa di Loreto.

**Figure 1.6.** Giovanni Battista de' Cavalieri, *The Virgin of Loreto*, 1560-1600. Engraving on paper, 35.2 x 25.2 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1874,0613.633. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

**Figure 2.1.** The Low Countries in 1566. Image © Christine Kooi 2022.

**Figure 2.2.** The Low Countries in 1609. Image © Christine Kooi 2022.

**Figure 2.3.** Cornelis Galle, emblem of printing in *Af-Beeldinghe van d'eerste eenwe der Societeyt Iesu voor ooghen ghestelt door de Duyts-Nederlantsche prouincie der seluer Societeyt*, 1640. Image © University of Illinois.

**Figure 2.4.** Hieronymus Wierix, *The Annunciation with prayers*, before 1595. Engraving on paper, 13.4 x 9.7 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1859,0709.3019. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

**Figure 2.5.** Antonius II Wierix, *Our Lady of Loreto amid symbols of the Litany of Loreto*, before 1604. Engraving on paper, 10.8 x 7.7 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Object number: RP-P-1904-1242. Image © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

**Figure 2.6.** Hieronymus Wierix, *Our Lady of Loreto with prayers*, c. 1605. Engraving on paper, 17.3 x 11.2 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1863,0509.650. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

**Figure 2.7.** Engraved by Hieronymus Wierix after Maarten de Vos, *The Virgin with symbols of the Litany of Loreto*, before 1611. Engraving on paper, 11.3 x 9 cm. Kupferstichkabinett der Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden. Object number: A 47745. Image © Deutsche Fotothek.

**Figure 2.8.** Hieronymus Wierix after Joannes Stradanus, *Virgin Mary flanked by symbols of the Litany of Loreto*, before 1612. Engraving on paper, 19.9 x 13.9 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Object number: RP-P-1906-1768. Image © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

**Figure 2.9.** Hieronymus Wierix, *Virgin Mary flanked by symbols of the Litany of Loreto*, before 1619. Engraving on paper, 15.4 x 10.7 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Object number: RP-P-1904-772. Image © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

**Figure 3.1.** Artist unknown, Marian altar. Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, Apeldoorn. Image © author of this thesis.

**Figure 3.2.** Simon Guillain, after Annibale Carracci, *Vendi Quadri* from the *Le Arti di Bologna* series, 1646. Etching on paper, 27.4 x 16.6 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1942,0514.3.20. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

**Figure 3.3.** Giuseppe Maria Mitelli, after Annibale Carracci, *The street seller of rosaries and pious prints*, 1660. Etching on paper, 29 x 19.3 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1850,0713.177. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

**Figure 3.4.** Niccolò School, *Madonna of the Snow*, c. 1590 – 1614. Japanese colors on paper, hanging scroll. Twenty-Six Martyrs Museum, Nagasaki. Object number: unknown. Image © Twenty-Six Martyrs Museum.

**Figure 3.5.** Caravaggio, *Madonna di Loreto* or *Madonna dei Pellegrini*, 1605. Basilica of Sant'Agostino, Rome. Object number: unknown. Image © Walter de Gruyter, 2019.

**Figure 3.6.** Anonymous artist, *Virgin enthroned suckling the infant Christ*, c. 1440-1480. Woodcut with stencil colouring, 53.6 x 41.2 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1895,0122.1187. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

**Figure 3.7.** Anonymous artist, *Madonna del Fuoco of Forlì*, fifteenth century. Woodcut with hand-stencilled colour. 55 x 40 cm. Santa Croce, Forlì. Object number: unknown. Image © Diocese of Forlì-Bertinoro.

**Figure 3.8.** Raphael Sadeler I, *Maria Lauretana*, 1575-1632. Engraving and letterpress on paper, 16.3 x 35.9 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1937,0915.159. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

**Figure 3.9.** Rapael Sadeler I, *Allergy of the Immaculate Conception*, 1605. Engraving on paper, 26 x 17.1 cm. La Salle University Art Museum, Philadelphia. Object number: 76-G-656. Image © La Salle University Art Museum.

**Figure 3.10.** Anonymous, after Rapael Sadeler I, *Mary on the crescent moon in mandorla with the symbols of the Marian litany around her*, 1605-1632. Engraving on paper, 13.8 x 9.4 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Object number: RP-P-OB-7655. Image © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

**Figure 3.11.** Michiel Snyders, after Jan van der Straet (Johannes Stradanus), *The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception*, after c. 1611. Engraving on paper, 20.8 x 15.6 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1868,0612.393. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

**Figure 3.12.** Cornelis Galle I, after Bernardo Castello, *The Virgin in Glory, standing on clouds surrounded by angels holding the symbols of the Immaculate Conception*, 1595-1633. Engraving on paper, 36.9 x 27.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Object number: 53.601.15(71). Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

**Figure 3.13.** Giacomo Lauro, *Descriptio Translationis Sanctae Domus Beatissimae Virginis e Nazareth in Dalmatiam et Inde Lauretum*, 1606. Object number: unknown. Volpini collection. Image © Volpini collection.

**Figure 3.14.** Giacomo Lauro, *Alma Domus, Urbs, Agerq[ue] Laureti, Miracula, ac iter e Nazareth in Italiam Picenumq[ue]*, 1608. 39.8 x 50.8 cm. The Johns Hopkins University Sheridan Libraries, Baltimore. Object number: unknown. Image © The Johns Hopkins University.

**Figure 3.15.** Anonymous, “Kyrie Eleison,” in Peter Stoegler, *Asma Poeticum Litaniarum Lauretanarum* (Linz: Typis Joannis Paltauff), plate no. 2. Object number: unknown. Image © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

**Figure 3.16.** Anonymous, “Christe Eleison,” in Peter Stoegler, *Asma Poeticum Litaniarum Lauretanarum* (Linz: Typis Joannis Paltauff), plate no. 2. Object number: unknown. Image © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

**Figure 3.17.** Anonymous, “Domus Aurea,” in Peter Stoegler, *Asma Poeticum Litaniarum Lauretanarum* (Linz: Typis Joannis Paltauff), plate no. 39. Object number: unknown. Image © Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

**Figure 3.18.** Francisco Rizi, *The Immaculate Conception*, seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, 211 x 376 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Object number: P005025. Image © Museo Nacional del Prado.

## Introduction

“In the afore named places the B. Virgin mother of God, chose her self a seate rather to rest in than dwell, that is to say, of no long continuance, because she determined ever from the beginning to make a settled seate in this place, where at this present she remaineth, and (unles some offence of the inhabitants or borderers do hinder it) we hope an everlasting.”<sup>1</sup>

This is how the tenth chapter of an English translation, from 1608, of a Latin text on the history of the Madonna of Loreto starts. This chapter goes on to describe the miraculous relocations of the Holy House of the Virgin Mary:

“Neither is it lawfull to doubt, but as the mother of God from the beginning foresaw, so could she have avoided the indiligence of the *Dalmatians* in *Sclavonie*, the crueltie of the teeves in the wood, and the detestable hatred of the two brothers in the hill, that was common unto them. For well knowing all this, even from the time that her sacred house departed first from *Nazareth*, and forsook her native soile, she her selfe made special choise of this place, to settle her a firme an a perpetuall seate. And in very deed to give credit to so unusuall a miracle, and never heard of before, that the often mutation of the place in so few years might make a thing of it selfe incredible, credible inough. For how could mortall men doubt, wheter that House was brought from *Galiley*; when tem selues had heard that in their owne age, the same was transported out of *Sclauonie* into *Picene*; and had seene, that in *Picene* it selfe within lesse then the compasse of a mile it changed seat and place, thrice before the yeare was expired. This third and last mutation fell in the yeare of our Redemption 1295.”<sup>2</sup>

A few centuries later, the Holy House of the Virgin is still seated at the heart of the Italian city of Loreto and is a beloved Marian pilgrimage site. The devotional and visual cult around this Madonna is still very much alive today. Many still believe in the miraculous powers of the Holy

---

<sup>1</sup> Orazio Torsellino, *The History of Our B. Lady of Loreto*, trans. Thomas Price (Saint-Omer: Imprinted with licence [at the English College Press], 1608), 53. The Huntington Library, available online via <https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/eebo/books/history-our-b-lady-loreto-tra-n-slated-out-latyn/docview/2248568073/sem-2?accountid=14772>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

House and the Madonna of Loreto, with a large community continuing to pray to her.<sup>3</sup> In the sixteenth century, a prayer, the Litany of Loreto, was tied to this Madonna and the Holy House at Loreto.

This prayer is, surprisingly, featured in six prints by the Antwerp engravers and publishers Hieronymus and Antonius II Wierix (see figures 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9). The prints are all small loose sheet prints, containing the text or symbols of the Litany of Loreto combined with an image of the Madonna. How did this prayer, associated with an Italian miraculous Madonna, end up on several engravings by artists from the Southern Netherlands? From this observation, the following research question emerged: what do the depictions of the Litany of Loreto, on six prints from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century by the Antwerp engravers and publishers Hieronymus and Antonie (II) Wierix, illuminate about the devotion around a miracle-working Madonna, associated with the Italian city of Loreto, in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Antwerp?

By drawing on various primary visual and textual sources and building on previous academic research, this thesis shows that the small Wierix prints featuring the Litany of Loreto, thanks to their universal character, formed by the recognizable iconography and Latin texts, likely reached far beyond early modern Antwerp into the hands and homes of devout Catholics. In this way, the prints may have played a role in the ‘settled seat’ of the Miraculous Madonna at Loreto, which, as Orazio Torsellino already wrote in the seventeenth century, will hopefully remain ‘everlasting.’

This thesis stems from and is indebted to existing scholarly research. This introduction explores the relationship between the subject of this thesis and the scholarly hinterland and describes how previous academic research has shaped the methods and approaches of this thesis.

### **Italian Miraculous Madonnas**

Firstly, this thesis builds on academic publications about Italian miraculous images of Madonna’s and saints. For example, Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser describe how miraculous images from the medieval and early modern period in Liguria “(…) continue to be the focus of local cults that create a powerful spiritual sense of neighbourhood through common visual references.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Devin Watkins, “Pope in Loreto: Mary’s House a home for youth, families, sick,” *Vatican News*, March 25, 2019, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-03/pope-francis-mass-loreto-mary-home-paplor.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser, “Miraculous Images and the Sanctification of Urban Neighbourhood in Post-Medieval Italy,” *Journal of Urban History* 32, no. 5 (2006): 729.

Another important publication is Megan Holmes's *The miraculous image in renaissance Florence*. This extensive publication aims to provide "(...) a corpus of Florentine Renaissance miraculous images and the presentation of this corpus in a sustained art historical study by focusing on the dynamic materiality of miraculous images and by utilizing the art historian's methodological tools of formal and contextual analysis."<sup>5</sup> The edited volume *Saints, miracles and the image: healing saints and miraculous images in the Renaissance* is also relevant as it contains several essays on the origins and devotional use of Italian miraculous images from the Renaissance.<sup>6</sup> What is striking in these publications, however, is that they mainly focus on the political or religious influence of miraculous Madonnas and saints in the local area, while in fact already in the Early Modern Period they often attracted interest and pilgrims from far beyond the city limits, even country borders. See for example the seventeenth century *Atlas Marianus* of the Jesuit Wilhelm Gumpfenberg (1609 – 1675), whose purpose it was to list all Marian shrines in the world.<sup>7</sup>

### Global print culture

Existing academic literature shows that devotional prints form an interesting object of research, that can provide fresh perspectives on religious culture. Literature has been published mainly on Dutch and Flemish Catholic devotional prints. See, for example Evelyne Verheggen's publication *Beelden voor passie en hartstocht: bid- en devotieprenten in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, 17de en 18de eeuw*.<sup>8</sup> In this publication, Verheggen examines the origins of prayer and devotional prints in the Dutch republic and their religious use. Another relevant, more recent, publication is *Komt pelgrims, komt hier: devotieel drukwerk voor bedevaartsplaatsen in Vlaanderen en Brabant (1500-1850)*. This study discusses the various functions and meanings that buyers and users have attributed to these pilgrimage prints and the changes this medium underwent over the centuries.<sup>9</sup> Existing literature also indicates that there were certain 'centres' for the printing of devotional prints in the Low

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<sup>5</sup> Meghan Holmes, *The miraculous image in renaissance Florence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 8.

<sup>6</sup> Sandra Cardarelli and Laura Fenelli, ed., *Saints, miracles and the image: healing saints and miraculous images in the Renaissance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Naima Ghermani, "Zwischen Wunder und Vernunft: Der "Atlas Marianus" des Jesuiten Wilhelm Gumpfenberg," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 40, no. 2 (2013): 235.

<sup>8</sup> Evelyne M.F. Verheggen. *Beelden voor passie en hartstocht: bid- en devotieprenten in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, 17de en 18de eeuw*. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Alfons K.L. Thijs, *Komt pelgrims, komt hier: devotieel drukwerk voor bedevaartsplaatsen in Vlaanderen en Brabant (1500-1850)*, edited by Jonas van Mulder (Leuven: Peeters, 2020).

Countries during the Early Modern Period, such as Antwerp as described by Alfons Thijs in the publication *Antwerpen, internationaal uitgeverscentrum van devotieprenten 17<sup>de</sup> -18<sup>de</sup> eeuw*.<sup>10</sup>

The devotional prints of the Litany of Loreto by the Wierix family were not expensive works of art, but ‘cheap prints.’ Therefore, existing research on these types of prints is important for this thesis. See for example Rosa Salzberg’s publication *Ephemeral city: cheap print and urban culture in Renaissance Venice* which studies the rise of cheap prints in Renaissance Venice and how it permeated the city’s urban culture.<sup>11</sup> However, cheap early modern prints were not necessarily bound by national borders. As Roeland Harms and colleagues argue in their study on the dissemination of popular prints which explores the ways by which cheap print moved across Europe, focussing on Italy, the Netherlands and Britain in the period from 1500-1820.<sup>12</sup> In a publication from a more recent date, David Atkinson and Stephen Roud edited an volume with an even broader perspective on the cheap print cultures in Europe, placing particular local stories in a broader perspective in order to show overarching themes.<sup>13</sup> That said, in the early modern period, prints were displaced on an even larger scale, as Heather Madar and colleagues show in a collection of essays on the transmission of knowledge, both written and visual, between Europe and the rest of the world by means of print.<sup>14</sup>

In the study of Catholic devotional prints from the Early Modern Period, there is a growing scholarly interest in the influence of the Counter-Reformation on this art form. Initially, the academic focus was mainly on the role of printed media among Protestants, especially within the context of the Low Countries. However, a recent publication edited by Renaud Adam, Rosa De Marco and Malcolm Walsby draws attention to the importance of books and prints at the time of the Catholic Reformation in the Low Countries.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Alfons K.L. Thijs, *Antwerpen, internationaal uitgeverscentrum van devotieprenten 17<sup>de</sup>-18<sup>de</sup> eeuw* (Leuven: Peeters, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Rosa Salzberg, *Ephemeral city: cheap print and urban culture in Renaissance Venice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Roeland Harms, Joad Raymond and Jeroen Salman, ed., *Not dead things: the dissemination of popular print in England and Wales, Italy, and the Low Countries, 1500-1820* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> David Atkinson and Stephen Roud, ed., *Cheap print and the people: European perspectives on popular literature* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Heather Madar, ed., *Prints as agents of global exchange: 1500-1800* (Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2021).

<sup>15</sup> Renaud Adam, Rosa De Marco, and Malcolm Walsby, ed., *Books and Prints at the Heart of the Catholic Reformation in the Low Countries (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries)* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2022).



## Domestic devotion

The research proposed here is also partly on the role of prints in personal devotion and devotion at home. The studying of the devotional prints therefore contributes to a further understanding of ‘domestic’ or ‘lay’ devotion which is receiving increasing attention within the academic literature. See for example the exhibition catalogue *Madonnas & miracles: the holy home in Renaissance Italy*, that accompanied an exhibition in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, which explores a variety of devotional objects and images. Included is an Italian devotional print from the fifteenth century of a miraculous Madonna.<sup>16</sup> Also relevant are publications such as *The sacred home in Renaissance Italy* and *Domestic devotions in early modern Italy* which focus on how religion and devotional objects coloured the everyday life and household of people in Renaissance Italy.<sup>17</sup> Researching devotional prints from this perspective ties in with ‘the Material Turn’ within the Humanities, because the prints themselves are used as ‘tools’ to examine religious culture.<sup>18</sup> However, this perspective does not yet seem to be much applied in the studying of religious objects from the Low Countries where the focus seems to be mainly on the artists, the production process of the prints and their distribution.

## Beyond Florence, beyond Italy

This thesis furthermore contributes to scholarship on late medieval and early modern Italy that seeks to go beyond the ‘Florentine model’ to explore the enduring influence of early modern Italian religious art outside of Florence and even outside of Italy.<sup>19</sup> In the specific case of the Loreto cult, the methods and work of two authors have served as a great inspiration for this thesis. Karin Vélez’s research illustrates how global Catholicism proliferated by examining historical accounts of the movement of the Holy House of Loreto across the Mediterranean in

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<sup>16</sup> Maya Corry, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven, ed., *Madonnas & miracles: the holy home in Renaissance Italy* (London; New York: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2017), 118-119.

<sup>17</sup> Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard and Mary Laven, *The sacred home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) and Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin, ed., *Domestic devotions in early modern Italy* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Peter J. Bräunlein, “Thinking Religion Through Things: Reflections on the Material Turn in the Scientific Study of Religion’s,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 28, no. 4/5 (2016): 365-399.

<sup>19</sup> Paula Findlen, Michelle M. Fontaine and Duane J. Osheim, ed., *Beyond Florence: the Contours of Medieval and Early Modern Italy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

the thirteenth century and the Atlantic in the seventeenth century.<sup>20</sup> Erin Giffin's ongoing research on the replicas of the Holy House of Loreto, having identified over 250 replicas worldwide, sheds light on how sacred spaces such as the *Santa Casa* physically travelled during the Early Modern Period.<sup>21</sup> The innovative and multidisciplinary approach of these two authors, along with their broad, international perspective on the Loreto cult, have influenced the approach of this thesis, which will be outlined in the section below.

### **Approaching the Wierix depictions of the Litany of Loreto**

The first chapter of this thesis describes the origins and development of the Litany of Loreto to outline the historical and religious context surrounding the Madonna of Loreto, the legend of the Holy House of Loreto, and the Litany of Loreto. It also discusses how the Litany of Loreto spread beyond the Italian borders. This is necessary in order to understand what is depicted on the Wierix prints of the Litany of Loreto and how the Wierix brothers might have acquired knowledge about the Madonna and Litany of Loreto. The objective of the second chapter is to provide an investigation of the Wierix family, the different print designs that were created around the Litany of Loreto by the Wierix family and their place within the family's oeuvre. The third chapter examines, after being familiarized with the background of the Litany of Loreto and the prints the Wierix family made of this subject, the distribution and the devotional function of these prints and compares the Wierix prints with other engravings of the Litany of Loreto from the Low Countries, as well as from other countries.

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<sup>20</sup> Karin Vélez, *The Miraculous Flying House of Loreto: Spreading Catholicism in the Early Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Erin Giffin, "Replicas of the Santa Casa: Networks of Geographic Translation," ArcGis StoryMaps, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/01dbd5ff3a5d4037b8567c7b6b760fa6>. There is also a monograph forthcoming on this subject.

## 1. Origins and development of the Litany of Loreto

### 1.1 Introduction

Miraculous Madonnas were to be found everywhere in European Catholic societies in the Early Modern period. As already mentioned in the introduction, the seventeenth century *Atlas Marianus* by the German Jesuit Wilhelm Gumpfenberg illustrates this phenomenon. This book, of which the first Latin and German editions were published between 1657 and 1659 in octavo format, listed all European Marian shrines in geographical order. This edition contains around one hundred entries. The second edition, published in 1672, contains 1200 entries, listing not only European Marian shrines but also shrines dedicated to the Madonna outside of Europe. Where in the first edition each entry of a miraculous Madonna was accompanied by a depiction of its specific Madonna, the second edition omitted almost all depictions to incorporate a classification system.<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly, the Madonna of Loreto plays a prominent role in both editions of the *Atlas Marianus*. The frontispiece of both editions holds an image of the Madonna of Loreto, with the Christ child in her lap, seated on top of the *Santa Casa* which floats between two globes (figure 1.1. and 1.2.). The globe above the Mother of God, at which she holds up her hand, refers to the heavens, with written under it to the left *Ne Feriat*.<sup>23</sup> The globe beneath the Madonna refers to the earth, with written above it on the right *Ne Pereat*.<sup>24</sup> The Madonna is thus depicted as a mediator between heaven and earth, also boldly stated on the frontispiece of the second edition on which is written, under the image, *MEDLATRIX Caeli et Terrea*.<sup>25</sup> Next to this, both editions feature the Madonna of Loreto as their very first entry.<sup>26</sup>

It is fascinating that Wilhelm Gumpfenberg, of all the Madonnas he describes in both editions, gives such prominence to the Madonna of Loreto. What does this say about the

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<sup>22</sup> Ghermani, “Zwischen Wunder und Vernunft,” 227-228.

<sup>23</sup> This translates to “So that it does not touch”. I want to thank Philip Muijtjens for providing the translation.

<sup>24</sup> This translates to “So that it does not perish”. I want to thank Philip Muijtjens for providing the translation.

<sup>25</sup> This translates to “Mediatrice of Heaven and Earth”.

<sup>26</sup> See for the first edition Wilhelm Gumpfenberg, *Atlas Marianus Sive De Imaginibus Deiparae Per Orbem Christianum Miraculosas*, bd. 1 Ingolstadii: Haenlin, 1657. Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, Th L 254. Available online via <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/view/bsb11288120?page=6%2C7>. See for the second edition Wilhelm Gumpfenberg, *Atlas Marianus, Quo Sanctae Dei Genitricis Mariae Imaginum Miraculosarum Origines Duodecim Historiarum Centurijs explicantur*. Monachii: Jaecklin, 1672. Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, 2 Th L 32. Available online via <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/view/bsb11204453?page=6%2C7>.

‘popularity’ or ‘status’ of the Madonna of Loreto in the seventeenth century? And can this information help us to better understand the prints of the Litany of Loreto printed and published by the Wierix family and place them in their own time? Of course, this cannot be derived from this one publication alone. This chapter therefore aims to place the Madonna of Loreto and the Litany of Loreto in context by outlining their historical and religious background, based on various sources. First, the legend of the Madonna of Loreto and the sanctuary of Loreto will be described. Next, the origins of the Litany of Loreto will be discussed, and an explanation of the text will be given. The last part of this chapter will examine the spread of the Litany of Loreto outside of Italy.

Since the primary research question of this thesis focuses on the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century prints of the Litany of Loreto by the Antwerp Wierix family, this chapter will mainly focus on the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Therefore, this chapter does not contain the complete histories of the Madonna of Loreto and Litany of Loreto. Consequently, due to the scope of this thesis, primary texts, for example, will not be discussed in great detail. Additionally, a few notes regarding the source material are necessary. First, miraculous Madonnas and saints are often clouded in mysteries and legend, which is part of their charm. However, this does complicate academic research, as few facts and exact data are known. Furthermore, little research has yet been conducted on the Litany of Loreto. Therefore, much of the knowledge mentioned in this chapter has been plucked from various publications that perhaps at first glance do not appear to be relevant to the litany. It has been quite a puzzle to connect these pieces, and it might be that some crucial parts are still missing.

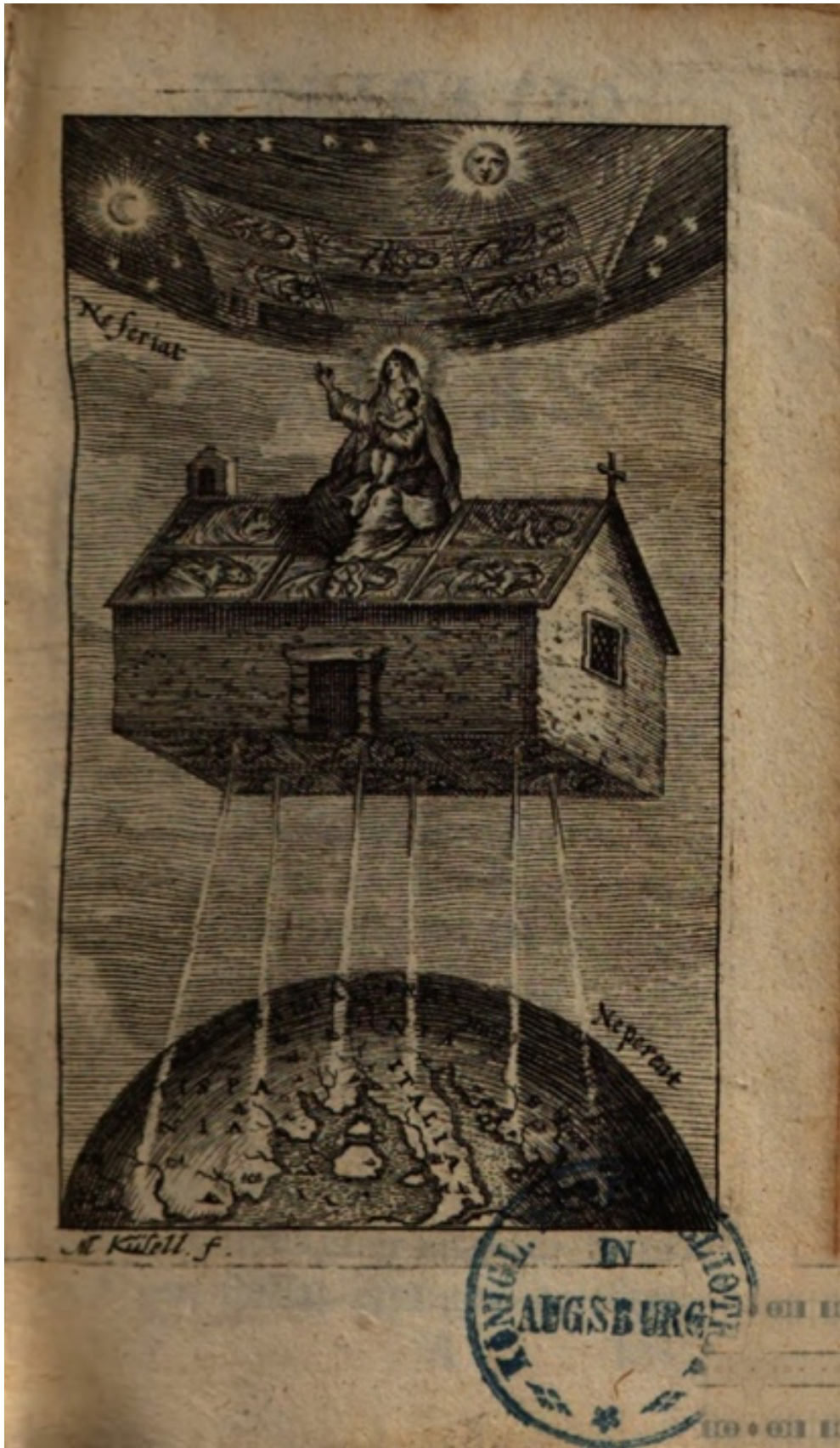


Figure 1.1. M. Küsell, frontispiece of a first edition of Wilhelm Gumpenberg's *Atlas Mariannus*, 1657. Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek - Th L 254.



**Figure 1.2.** Melchior Haffner, frontispiece of a second edition of Wilhelm Gumpfenberg's *Atlas Marianus*. 1672. Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, 2 Th L 32.

## 1.2. The legend, the sanctuary and the Madonna of Loreto

What is the origin of the Madonna of Loreto and the legend surrounding her? And in what ways is she and the legend depicted? This section explores these questions in two parts. The first part looks at the legend and the second at the shrine at Loreto.

### 1.2.1. The legend of the Holy House of Loreto

The website of the *Santuario Pontificio della Santa Casa di Loreto* mentions two historical interpretations of the legend of Loreto. The first states that the Holy House was transported by angels from Nazareth to Loreto. The second “(...) tells that in 1291, the crusaders were expelled from the Holy Land by the Muslims and that some Christians saved the house of the Virgin from destruction. First, they brought it to a village in Illyria where the Shrine of Our Lady of Trsat was later built in memory of this appearance. Later, in the night between 9 and 10 December 1294, it was transported to the ancient municipality of Recanati: first at the port, then on a hill in a public street, where it is still hosted today.”<sup>27</sup>

In earlier accounts of the legend of the Holy House of Loreto, these two interpretations are more intertwined.<sup>28</sup> For example, Girolamo Angelitta describes in his *L'istoria della Traslatione della Santa Casa della Madonna a Loreto* from 1580 that on December 2, 1295 a house fell from the sky into the town of Recanati, on property owned by a woman named Laureta. Locals went inside and found a painting of the Virgin Mary. The Madonna appeared and explained that the house was the house in which she had been immaculately conceived, received the Annunciation and raised Christ. The apostles had later used it as a church with an image of her made by St. Luke. In 1291 angels carried the house away to keep it out of the hands of Muslims. It had crossed the Mediterranean to Trsat, also known as Dalmatia, Illyria and Slavonia, where it stayed for three years. After this the Madonna took off and descended in the forest near Recanti on the eve of 10 December 1294, before moving to the property of Laureta. After this the Holy House moved one more time, higher up the coastal line, but the name ‘Loreto’ stuck to it.<sup>29</sup>

Since the *Santa Casa* is intimately associated with the Virgin and is considered a relic, Loreto became, by the late fifteenth century, one of the most important pilgrimage sites in the

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<sup>27</sup> “The Holy House from Nazareth to Loreto,” Santuario Pontificio della Santa Casa di Loreto, accessed July 11, 2024, <https://www.santuarioloreto.va/en/storia/la-santa-casa-da-nazareth-a-loreto.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Older, fifteenth century, publications on the legend of Loreto are written by Pietro Giorgio Tolomei, *Relatio Teramani*, en Battista Spagnoli, *Historia ecclesiae Lauretanae*.

<sup>29</sup> Vélez, *The Miraculous Flying House of Loreto*, 3-4.

Western world.<sup>30</sup> In the well-known reference work *Lexicon der christlichen Ikonografie* the lemma on the Holy House of Loreto is included in the Mary relics section. This lemma describes that since the fifteenth century, the legend is mainly depicted with the Madonna sitting on a house usually carried by angels.<sup>31</sup>

The greatest number of images are prints serving as frontispieces to histories of the *Santa Casa*, depicting the flying Holy House of Loreto with the Madonna and Christ child. Sculptural depictions of the miracle also tend to focus on the narrative of the flight, but are in some cases more complex. For example, the relief by Niccolò Tribolo, inserted into the architectural enclosure built around the shrine in Loreto in the sixteenth century, represents not only the Translation but also the shift of the House away from a scene of murder in the Recanati forest and the relic's final landing, where a group of Christians receive it in adoration. In paintings representing the Translation, however, a multiplicity of figures and devotions unrelated to the miraculous event of the flight of the house are often associated with the subject. Especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, enriched iconographic representations abound. See for example an early seventeenth century painting attributed to Domenichino depicting the Madonna of Loreto appearing to Saints John the Baptist, Eligius, and Anthony Abbot (figure 1.3.). Where the graphic and sculptural representations merely recounted the event of the Translation, the pictorial tradition set the miracle among different saintly figures and in varying iconographic programs.<sup>32</sup>

The Holy House of Loreto was not only depicted two-dimensionally, replicas of it were constructed in various places. Fifteenth and sixteenth century replicas were built mostly in Italy, but it became a major phenomenon in the seventeenth century. Around 1625, the shrine of Loreto began selling blueprints of the Holy House as souvenirs for pilgrims. These were printed in multiple languages and available as loose-leaf prints but could also be incorporated in books. All around Europe, replicas of the Holy House were built.<sup>33</sup> On the website *Replicas of the Santa Casa: Networks of Geographic Translation* dr. Erin Giffin is documenting all the replicas of the Holy House of Loreto around the world. Giffin's maps clearly show that in the seventeenth century, many replicas of the Holy House were built throughout Europe. In the eighteenth century, this

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<sup>30</sup> William Barcham, "Giambattista Tiepolo's Ceiling for S. Maria di Nazareth in Venice: Legend, Traditions, and Devotions," *The Art Bulletin* 61, no. 3 (1979): 430.

<sup>31</sup> "Lexicon of Christian Iconography," Brill, accessed July 12, 2024, [https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1163/9789004393905\\_3\\_544](https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1163/9789004393905_3_544).

<sup>32</sup> Barcham, "Giambattista Tiepolo's Ceiling for S. Maria di Nazareth in Venice," 433-434.

<sup>33</sup> Vélez, *The Miraculous Flying House of Loreto*, 124-127.



trend seems to move more to Eastern Europe but also to the Americas. In the nineteenth and twentieth century the trends seems to slowly die out, with one upsurge in the twenty-first century in Taiwan.<sup>34</sup>

### 1.2.2. *The sanctuary at Loreto and the Madonna of Loreto*

Firstly, it is important to realize that the term ‘sanctuary’ has no official definition but that it is generally used to distinguish churches that are the object of pilgrimage. Sanctuaries draw devotees not just from the local area but also from beyond.<sup>35</sup>

Today, the small, original Holy House is fully enshrined by a basilica and forms the heart of the city of Loreto. But, it once stood on a stone-paved road, as archaeological excavations in the early twentieth century have showed. In the thirteenth century the Holy House consisted only of three walls made of sandstone. According to Catholic legend, the fourth wall was originally formed by the grotto that supported Mary’s house in Nazareth. In the fourteenth century, a fourth wall was added to the Holy House where the altar is still located nowadays. The other three walls were raised in height. They were frescoed with scenes of Mary’s life, that today have almost faded away.

Between the fourteenth and seventeenth century the Holy House was slowly enshrined.<sup>36</sup> The first architectural move was the building of four towers linked by a wall around the relic. They were later used as the foundations of the four sacristies of the current basilica. Documents of the fourteenth century state that the Holy House was surrounded by brick walls with loggias. By the middle of the fifteenth century a church was erected, covering the *Santa Casa*, and public buildings, such as a hospital and *palazzo del commune*, were grouped around an open space. By the end of the fifteenth century, construction started on a much larger church and the open space in front of the church expanded by demolishing some of the houses. In 1507 Donato Bramante (c. 1444 - 1514) was send to Loreto by pope Julius II to fortify the city and church, to build an arcaded palace and a marble casting for the Holy House. This ambitious plan was not finished by the time Bramante passed away. The *campanile* was designed by Vanvitelli, the *cupola* by Giuliano da Sangallo, and the façade was built at the end of the sixteenth century. The fountain, the

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<sup>34</sup> Giffin, “Replicas of the Santa Casa: Networks of Geographic Translation,” ArcGis StoryMaps.

<sup>35</sup> Michael P. Carroll, *Madonnas that Maim: Popular Catholicism in Italy since the Fifteenth Century* (Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 23.

<sup>36</sup> Vélez, *The Miraculous Flying House of Loreto*, 12-13.

pavement and the statue of Pope Sixtus V on the piazza also date back to the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>37</sup>

Inside the church, under the *cupola*, stands the enshrined Holy House. Inside it, above the altar, at the heart of the *Santa Casa*, stands a black wooden statue of the Madonna with the baby Jesus on one arm.<sup>38</sup> But before the Madonna of Loreto was a statue, she was rendered as a panel painting, attributed to Saint Luke. This painting was Byzantine in style, depicting the Madonna half-length and dark toned.<sup>39</sup> This first Madonna of Loreto seems to precede the Holy House. A papal document from the early fourteenth century lists Loreto as a country chapel, distinguished to a miraculous painting of the Madonna.<sup>40</sup> In the late fifteenth century, this icon was altered when a basilica was constructed at Loreto and became three-dimensional. This sculpture was also again attributed to Saint Luke. This statue was small and showed a full-figured Madonna. Crowned she stood with the baby Jesus on her arm, who held a globe with a crucifix on top. She was painted in a dark shade of brown. The sculpture that nowadays stands atop the altar in the *Santa Casa* was crafted in 1921 since the former sculpture was destroyed in a fire. This sculpture, by Enrique Quattrini and Leopoldo Celani, was made after the former statue, but now carved from dark Lebanese cedar wood.<sup>41</sup> The Rome based artist Giovanni Battista de' Cavalieri (c. 1525-1601) was probably the first engraver to produce a print of the Madonna of Loreto, in its architectural niche, entitled the *Vero retratto di sancta Maria de Loreto fatto retrat per Il Rmo Cardinal de Augusta* (figure 1.6.).<sup>42</sup>

Several popes have patronized Loreto and left their mark such as popes Gregory XI (1370–8), Nicholas V (1447–1455), Pius II (1458–1464), Paul II (1464–1471), Innocent VIII (1484–1492), and Julius II (1503–1513).<sup>43</sup> There are a number of popes who stand out in the literature on Loreto, such as pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484). From the start of his pontificate, he took a special interest in the shrine. In 1476, he removed Loreto from the jurisdiction of Recanati and placed it under papal rule. When this bull was revoked in the following year, Loreto fell back

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<sup>37</sup> Kathleen Weil-Garris Posner, “Cloister, Court and City Square,” *Gesta* 12, no. 1 (1973): 125-128.

<sup>38</sup> Vélez, *The Miraculous Flying House of Loreto*, 13.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 167-171.

<sup>42</sup> Erin Giffin, “*Translatio* in stampa: Sisto V e l’ampia diffusione della Santa Casa di Loreto,” in *Su Ali di Carta: Traslazioni della Santa Casa a stampa in età sistina*, ed. Erin Giffin, Vito Punzi and Antonio Volpini (Loreto: Museo Pontificio Santa Casa di Loreto, 2022), 6. I would like to thank the author for her kindness in sharing the Italian catalogue and her contribution in English with me.

<sup>43</sup> Vélez, *The Miraculous Flying House of Loreto*, 48.

under the rule of the Bishop of Recanati. But by 1507, pope Julius II had Loretan matters firmly in hand.<sup>44</sup> He passed a bull in the same year officially sanctioning the legend of the Holy House's translation.<sup>45</sup> Pope Sixtus V, his pontificate lasted from 1585 to 1590, carried out many projects for the Loretan sanctuary. On 17 March 1586, he elevated the town of Loreto to the level of a city and the church of the Holy House to the rank of a basilica. His artistic commissions for the sanctuary included, amongst others, new bronze doors for the basilica and the bronze statue of the pontiff himself on the outer steps.<sup>46</sup>

Besides the patronage of the Popes, several orders have taken custody of the shrine at Loreto. Traditionally, small and alternating groups of secular clergies served at Loreto and lived there, but no order had formally been charged with the care of the sanctuary before the fifteenth century. However, in 1488 Cardinal Basso della Rovere brought the Carmelite order to Loreto.<sup>47</sup> In its turn, the order has attached its own legends to the Holy House. One of the oldest states that the order had the guardianship of the *Santa Casa* not only in Loreto but in Nazareth as well. In addition, the Carmelites supposedly fled Palestine for the west at the same moment as the Virgin's Holy House. It is further stated that the Carmelites brought with them during their flight the Litany of Loreto and inaugurated it at the new sanctuary. Another legend tells how the Madonna and the young Christ took afternoon strolls from time to time to visit the hermits of Mount Carmel. So, the histories of both the relic and the order had merged.<sup>48</sup> In 1554 the Jesuits arrived at Loreto and led to an upsurge in devotional culture there, and would be responsible for the spread of the Loreto cult.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Weil-Garris Posner, "Cloister, Court and City Square," 125.

<sup>45</sup> Alexander J. Fisher, "*Thesaurus Litaniarum*: the symbolism and practice of musical litanies in counter-reformation Germany," *Early Music History* 34 (2015): 56-57.

<sup>46</sup> Giffin, "*Translatio* in stampa," 5.

<sup>47</sup> Weil-Garris Posner, "Cloister, Court and City Square," 126-127.

<sup>48</sup> Barcham, "Giambattista Tiepolo's Ceiling for S. Maria di Nazareth in Venice," 435.

<sup>49</sup> Fisher, "*Thesaurus Litaniarum*," 56-57.



**Figure 1.3.** Domenichino, *Altarpiece from the Church of San Francesco, Fano: The 'Madonna of Loreto' Appearing to Saints John the Baptist, Eligius, and Anthony Abbot*, c. 1618 —1620. Oil on canvas, 241 x 170.5 cm. North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh. Object number: GL.60.17.51.



Figure 1.4. The sanctuary at Loreto seen from above.



Figure 1.5. The Madonna of Loreto inside the Holy House. Basilica of the Holy House, Loreto.



VERO RETRATTO DI SANCTA MARIA DI LORETO  
FATTO RETTRAR PER IL B.<sup>NO</sup> CARDINAL DIAGVSTA  
*Ioannes baptista de cavalieri scideban*

Figure 1.6. Giovanni Battista de' Cavalieri, *The Virgin of Loreto*, 1560-1600. Engraving on paper, 35.2 x 25.2 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1874,0613.633.

### 1.3. The Litany of Loreto

Having gained more insight into the Madonna of Loreto, the focus now shifts to the Litany of Loreto. How do they relate to each other? And when and where did the litany arise? What does the text contain and how has it developed over time? And how is the litany depicted in the visual arts? This section explores these questions in two parts. The first section focusses on the origins and text of the litany. The second section focusses on depictions of the litany in art.

#### 1.3.1. *The origins and text of the litany*

A litany indicates in general a liturgical prayer, that includes a number of prayers or invocations. These are recited by a soloist, usually a deacon, while the others present respond with supplications such as Amen, Lord have mercy on us or Pray for us. The word ‘litany’ therefore means, according to its origin, ‘supplication.’ A litany can also be utilized in other forms of prayer, such as during a procession.<sup>50</sup> In addition, a litany can also serve as a form of prayer for private devotion.<sup>51</sup>

One of the most common litanies is that of All Saints, which is included in almost all liturgical books today. It was first primarily employed as a personal prayer, but at some point was incorporated into the liturgy. The content was changed somewhat during the Middle Ages, but the general scheme remained unchanged. The biggest part of the litany consists of the invocation of various saints.<sup>52</sup> In 1601, pope Clement VIII forbade the publication of any litany, except that of the Saints and the Litany of Loreto, unless they were approved by the Congregation of the Rites. This congregation has approved three more litanies, the Litany of the Sacred Heart, of the Holy Name of Jesus and of Saint Joseph.<sup>53</sup>

Of the *Litaniae Lauretanae* or Litany of Loreto it is claimed that this litany would date back to ancient times, but evidence for this is lacking. It is true that, earlier writers, mainly from the East, greeted the Madonna with all kinds of flattering titles. The litany in honour of the Madonna is mentioned at Loreto in 1531, 1547 and 1554. However, it is unclear whether it originated in Loreto itself, or ended up there via another route. For example, it has been mentioned earlier in

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<sup>50</sup> L. Brinkhoff, A. Hollaardt, A. Verheul, A. Vismans, A. L. Wegman and W. de Wolf, ed., “Litanie,” in *Liturgisch Woordenboek II* (Roermond: J. J. Romen & Zonen, 1968), 1556-1557.

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Louth, ed., “Litany,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), <https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/view/10.1093/acref/9780199642465.001.0001/acref-9780199642465-e-4265>.

<sup>52</sup> L. Brinkhoff, A. Hollaardt, A. Verheul, A. Vismans, A. L. Wegman and W. de Wolf, ed., “Litanie,” 1562-1565.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Klaver, *The Litany of Loreto* (St. Louis, London: B. Herder Book Co., 1954), 3.

this chapter that the Carmelites claim to have taken the litany from the east to Loreto, but this is also claimed by the Dominicans. What can be established for certain is that the text was taken from Loreto by Peter Canisius to distribute in Germany. The first German translation was published at Dillingen in 1558 and approved by Pope Sixtus V.<sup>54</sup>

The text of the Litany of Loreto mainly consists of invoking the Madonna through the various titles assigned to her.<sup>55</sup> It is a highly formulaic and repetitive prayer.<sup>56</sup> This text is not fixed and has expanded over time. While Rome's approval is required to add titles to the litany, the rite congregation's repeated prohibitions in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries against unauthorized additions imply that people probably added them independently.

Pope Leo XIII enriched the litany with two new invocations: *Regina sacratissimi Rosarii*, in 1883, and *Mater boni consilii*, in 1903. In World War I, Pope Benedict XV added *Regina pacis*. Pope Pius XII approved *Regina in caelum assumpta* on the occasion of the dogmatic declaration of the Assumption of the Madonna in 1950. Exceptions are also sometimes made for fraternal orders. For example, the Servites were allowed to include *Regina Servorum tuorum* in the litany and the Franciscans *Regina ordinis Minorum*.<sup>57</sup> Even very recently, on June 20, 2020, the feast day of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pope Francis added three new invocations to the litany: *Mater misericordiae*, *Mater spei* and *Solacium migrantium*. So, the litany is still being utilized by the Catholics.<sup>58</sup>

To get an idea of the structure and content of this text, a version of the Litany of Loreto is inserted below. It should be mentioned here that this comes from a 2015 article and that when looking at older versions of the litany, one really needs to look at the text line by line to try and place it in the right time.

Kyrie eleison.	Lord, have mercy.
Christe eleison.	Christ, have mercy.
Kyrie eleison.	Lord, have mercy.
Christe audi nos.	Christ, hear us.
Christe exaudi nos.	Christ, graciously hear us.

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<sup>54</sup> L. Brinkhoff, A. Hollaardt, A Verheul, A. Vismans, A. L. Wegman and W. de Wolf, ed., "Litanie," 1564.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Fisher, "*Thesaurus Litaniurum*," 46.

<sup>57</sup> L. Brinkhoff, A. Hollaardt, A Verheul, A. Vismans, A. L. Wegman and W. de Wolf, ed., "Litanie," 1564.

<sup>58</sup> "Pope adds three new invocations to the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary," Vatican News, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-06/pope-francis-loreto-litany-new-invocations.html>.



Pater de caelis, Deus, miserere nobis.	God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.
Fili redemptory mundi, Deus,	God the Son, redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
Spiritus sancte Deus, miserere nobis.	God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.
Sancta Trinitas unus Deus, miserere nobis.	Holy Trinity, have mercy on us.
Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis.	Holy Mary, pray for us.
Sancta Dei Genitrix, ora pro nobis.	Holy Mother of God, pray for us.
Sancta Virgo virginum, ora pro nobis.	Holy Virgin of virgins, pray for us.
Mater Christi, ora pro nobis.	Mother of Christ, pray for us.
Mater divinae gratiae, ora pro nobis.	Mother of divine grace, pray for us.
Mater purissima, ora pro nobis.	Mother most pure, pray for us.
Mater castissima, ora pro nobis.	Mother of most chaste, pray for us.
Mater inviolata, ora pro nobis.	Mother inviolate, pray for us.
Mater intemerata, ora pro nobis.	Mother undefiled, pray for us.
Mater amabilis, ora pro nobis.	Amiable Mother, pray for us.
Mater admirabilis, ora pro nobis.	Admirable Mother, pray for us.
Mater Creatoris, ora pro nobis.	Mother of the Creator, pray for us.
Mater Salvatoris, ora pro nobis.	Mother of the Savior, pray for us.
Virgo prudentissima, ora pro nobis.	Virgin most prudent, pray for us.
Virgo veneranda, ora pro nobis.	Venerable Virgin, pray for us.
Virgo praedicanda, ora pro nobis.	Renowned Virgin, pray for us.
Virgo potens, ora pro nobis.	Powerful Virgin, pray for us.
Virgo Clemens, ora pro nobis.	Merciful Virgin, pray for us.
Virgo fidelis, ora pro nobis.	Faithful Virgin, pray for us.
Speculum iustitiae, ora pro nobis.	Mirror of justice, pray for us.
Sedes sapientiae, ora pro nobis.	Seat of wisdom, pray for us.
Causa nostrae laetitiae, ora pro nobis.	Cause of our joy, pray for us.
Vas spirituale, ora pro nobis.	Vessel of spirit, pray for us.
Vas honorabile, ora pro nobis.	Vessel of honour, pray for us.
Vas insigne devotionis, ora pro nobis.	Vessel of great devotion, pray for us.

Rosa mystica, ora pro nobis.  
Turris Davidica, ora pro nobis.  
Turris eburnea, ora pro nobis.  
Domus aurea, ora pro nobis.  
Foederis arca, ora pro nobis.  
Ianua Caeli, ora pro nobis.  
Stella matutina, ora pro nobis.

Mystical rose, pray for us.  
Tower of David, pray for us.  
Tower of ivory, pray for us.  
House of gold, pray for us.  
Ark of the covenant, pray for us.  
Gate of heaven, pray for us.  
Morning star, pray for us.

Refugium peccatorum, ora pro nobis.  
Consolatrix afflictorum, ora pro nobis.  
Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.

Refuge of sinners, pray for us.  
Comforter of the afflicted, pray for us.  
Help of the Christians, pray for us.

Regina Angelorum, ora pro nobis.  
Regina Patriarcharum, ora pro nobis.  
Regina Prophetarum, ora pro nobis.  
Regina Apostolorum, ora pro nobis.  
Regina Martyrum, ora pro nobis.  
Regina Confessorum, ora pro nobis.  
Regina Virginum, ora pro nobis.  
Regina Sanctorum omnium, ora pro nobis.

Queen of the Angels, pray for us.  
Queen of the Patriarchs, pray for us.  
Queen of the Prophets, pray for us.  
Queen of the Apostles, pray for us.  
Queen of the Martyrs, pray for us.  
Queen of the Confessors, pray for us.  
Queen of the Virgins, pray for us.  
Queen of All Saints, pray for us.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,  
Parce nobis Domine.  
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,  
Exaudi nos Domine.  
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,  
Miserere nobis.

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,  
Spare us, Lord.  
Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,  
Hear us, Lord.  
Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,  
Have mercy on us.

Christe audi nos.  
Christe exaudi nos.  
Kyrie eleison.  
Christe eleison.  
Kyrie eleison.

Christ, hear us.  
Christ, graciously hear us.  
Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Fisher, “*Thesaurus Litaniarum*,” 46-48.

The many titles of the Madonna mentioned in the Litany of Loreto can be divided into a six-part structure. After invoking God and Christ, the first part of the litany emphasizes the sanctity of Mary. These titles are followed by references to Mary as a mother, highlighting the various facets of her motherhood. Then, titles praising the Madonna as Virgin, and the merit and efficacy of her virginity are presented. After this, the symbols of Mary are invoked, most of them stemming from the Old Testament. These lines are preceded by the glorification of Mary as a helper. The last section of the litany consists of titles referring to the Madonna as queen.<sup>60</sup>

It was customary not only to recite the text of the litany, but to do so while singing. This was done at home, in church or on the street during a procession. It was then the most common way to sing the litany antiphonally.<sup>61</sup> Each invocation was spoken by the leader of the group, while the response ‘ora pro nobis’ was then sung by the rest of those present according to an extremely short simple melodic formula.<sup>62</sup>

The litany has been set to music by different composers from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century, for example by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c. 1525–94).<sup>63</sup> Especially in the seventeenth century, the Litany of Loreto was a favourite with Italian composers to set to music.<sup>64</sup> For instance, a version of the Litany of Loreto set to music by Claudio Monteverdi

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<sup>60</sup> “Litany of Loreto in context,” University of Dayton, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/l/litany-of-loreto-in-context.php>.

<sup>61</sup> Antiphonal is defined as “a term describing works in which an ensemble is divided into distinct groups, performing in alternation and together.” See “Antiphonal,” *Grove Music Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.53793>.

<sup>62</sup> Iain Fenlon, “Music and Domestic Devotion in the Age of Reform,” in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, edited by Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 100.

<sup>63</sup> Gordon Campbell, “Litany of Loreto,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), <https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/view/10.1093/acref/9780199642465.001.0001/acref-9780199642465-e-4266>.

<sup>64</sup> Here in the footnote, I would like to honorably mention the female composer Isabella Leonarda (1620-1704), born in the North-Italian town of Novara. I do this here because she falls slightly outside the time period of this thesis. She was a nun who lived the greatest part of her life in an Ursuline convent. She also set the text of the litany of Loreto to music. See Stewart A. Carter, “Isabella Leonarda,” *Grove Music Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.13920> and David Anthony Blazey, “The Litany in Seventeenth-Century Italy” (PhD diss., University of Durham, 1990), 324-325.

(1567-1643) was published in 1620.<sup>65</sup> There are also some German composers who set the text of the litany to music in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.<sup>66</sup>

### 1.3.2. *The Litany of Loreto in art*

The remarkable aspect of the Litany of Loreto is that none of the titles refer to the legend of Loreto or the Madonna of Loreto. All the titles refer to the Madonna in general. This can therefore be seen in several depictions of the litany. It is often mixed with other types of Marian iconography, that have no relation to the legend or Madonna of Loreto. An interesting example of this is formed by the Altemps Chapel in the Santa Maria in Trastevere church in Rome. The construction on this chapel started in 1584 and was completed by 1589. It was built to house, as the altarpiece, the *Madonna della Clemenza*, one of the oldest images of the Virgin Mary in Rome. The stucco decorations of this chapel include motifs referring to titles given to the Madonna in the Litany of Loreto, especially around the altar. Pope Sixtus V visited the chapel on July 6, 1589.<sup>67</sup>

Another type of Marian iconography with which the legend and the Madonna of Loreto is sometimes mixed is that of the Immaculate Conception. The shrine at Loreto had long venerated the Immaculate Conception, because legend tells that it had taken place in the Holy House. Authorities at the sanctuary expressly fostered the association of the religious doctrine of Mary's freedom from the original sin with the relic of the Holy House. This connection was for instance expressed in prayer. Long before the Immaculate Conception was declared a dogma by Pius IX in 1854, resulting in the inclusion of the phrase *Regina sine Labe Originale* in the Litany of Loreto, prayers referred to the Immaculate Conception by invoking the Madonna as the 'spotless mirror of God'. The moon's ancient symbolic reference to purity and virginity was included in the church father's interpretation of Revelation 12:1 as a prophetic appearance of the Immaculate Virgin. We therefore know of many images in art depicting the Madonna on a crescent moon, as the Immaculate Virgin.<sup>68</sup> This is an iconographic type we see reflected in three of the prints with

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<sup>65</sup> James H. Moore, "*Venezia favorita da Maria: Music for the Madonna Nicopeia and Santa Maria della Salute*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 37, no. 2 (1984): 312.

<sup>66</sup> John Harper, "Polyphonic litanies after 1600," *Grove Music Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.16769>.

<sup>67</sup> Grażyna Jurkowlanec, "Cult and Patronage. The "Madonna della Clemenza", the Altemps and a Polish Canon in Rome" in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 72, no. 1 (2009): 73-75.

<sup>68</sup> Barcham, "Giambattista Tiepolo's Ceiling for S. Maria di Nazareth in Venice," 444-445.

symbols of the Litany of Loreto by Hieronymus Wierix (figures 2.7., 2.8. and 2.9.). The second chapter of this thesis will discuss this in more detail.

#### **1.4. The miracle-working Madonna and the Litany of Loreto outside of Italy**

The first and second section of this chapter have shown that both the legend, the Holy House and the Litany of Loreto, according to various accounts, are all said to have their origins not in Italy but in the East. Now, of course, the question is to what extent this is true, but it does fit nicely with the mobile, flexible and universal nature of the Loreto cult. For the sections above have also shown that at the end of the sixteenth century and certainly in the seventeenth century, the cult around Loreto spread far beyond Italy. See, among other things, the many replicas of the Holy House built throughout Europe and German composers who ventured to set the Litany of Loreto to music. The final section of this first chapter takes a closer look at the spread of the Madonna and Litany of Loreto. Who were important links in the spreading of the cult through Europe? Was it pilgrims who brought back the devotion? Where did the Madonna and litany first appear outside of Italy? And in what form? Could this perhaps tell us something about how the Wierix family gained knowledge of the Madonna and Litany of Loreto?

##### *1.4.1. The Counter-Reformation and the propaganda of miraculous saints and Madonnas*

This ‘promotion’ of the cult of Loreto in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century fits into a wider phenomenon. For eighteen years, in the mid-sixteenth century, in the Italian town of Trent, the Council of Trent met. The Council was, to put it very briefly, a reaction to Martin Luther and his critique on the Catholic church and ideas about reforming the Christian faith.<sup>69</sup> Among other things, the worshipping of various saints was discussed and the pilgrimages to sanctuaries. A temporary interruption of saints’ declarations was implemented, until 1588, and pilgrimages were less encouraged. Furthermore, church officials were more suspicious of miraculous images and believers who were recipients of visions. But by the end of the sixteenth century, pilgrimage and the miraculous workings of images and locations were slowly reaffirmed. Especially the European places where Protestantism failed to catch on “(...) witnessed a spirited revival of major shrines.”<sup>70</sup> Amongst others, the Virgin of Altötting, in south-Germany, was promoted by the

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<sup>69</sup> John William O’Malley, *Trent: what happened at the Council* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 2, 13.

<sup>70</sup> Alexandra Walsham, “The Sacred Landscape,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, ed. Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Jansen and Mary Laven (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2016), 206-207.

Wittelsbach dynasty and attracted many pilgrims. The Madonna of Scherpenheuvel, nowadays in the north of Belgium, benefited from the patronage of the Hapsburg archdukes Albert (1559 – 1621) and Isabella (1566 – 1633). Alexandra Walsham writes that “(...) Catholicism’s colonisation of geographical space was closely linked to a concerted effort ‘to create and inhabit a mythical past’.”<sup>71</sup> There was also a change in responsibilities for sanctuaries. Before the Counter-Reformation, the cult around a miraculous image was usually managed on a local level. But with the Reformation and the Council of Trent, this became a matter for the whole Catholic Church, on which its identity depended, and which declared the devotion and spread of a cult under the patronage of an order.<sup>72</sup>

#### 1.4.2. *England*

An English manuscript containing sonnets of the Litany of Loreto, published in 1632 by an unknown author, aligns well with the above statement.<sup>73</sup> They mourn the Reformation’s challenges to Marian devotion. This manuscript contains 135 poems. Forty-four sonnets elaborate on the titles given to the Madonna in the Litany of Loreto. About a third of the poems in the manuscript are satirical verses about Protestant reformers, interspersed with devotional material. The other poems are mostly about Mary and have different forms. The sonnet series on the Litany of Loreto connects Marian devotion of ‘then’ to ‘now’ and thereby combats the threat of the Reformation’s degrading of Marian devotion to the past. The unknown English author of the sonnets of the Litany of Loreto was not the only one engaged with this litany in early modern England. The Litany of Loreto proved popular among English Catholics. For example, as of 1589, the editions of the *Manual of prayer*, for early modern English Catholics the most important devotional book, contained the Litany of Loreto. The English composer Peter Philips (c. 1560/1561 – 1628) set the Litany of Loreto to music, and the Jesuit John Sweetnam published a work in 1620 containing meditations on the titles of the Madonna in the Litany of Loreto.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>72</sup> Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 485.

<sup>73</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Eng. poet. c. 61.

<sup>74</sup> Susannah Brietz Monta, “Remembering Mary, Contesting Reform: The English Sonnets of the Litany of Loreto,” in *Memory and the English Reformation*, ed. Alexandra Walsham, Bronwyn Wallace, Ceri Law, and Brian Cummings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 117-123.

Cambridge University Library has in its possession, in the special collections, an extraordinary personal note from an English believer about his pilgrimage to Loreto. This note is located in the English translation of a Latin text by Italian Jesuit Orazio Torsellino (1545 – 1599), dated 1608, on the history concerning the Madonna of Loreto.<sup>75</sup> The handwritten note, next to an image of the Madonna and Christ seated on the Holy House flying to Loreto, contains a vow of pilgrimage to Loreto and Rome. Unfortunately, it is not clear who wrote this note and when exactly. It probably refers to someone being ‘imprisoned’, however, it is not clear from the notes whether this is a literal or figurative imprisonment. It is estimated to have been written in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>76</sup> However, this publication and the note on the pilgrimage do provide a good example and support the fact that the cult around Loreto was alive and well in early modern England. The frontispiece of this English edition, engraved by Guillaume Du Tiel, is also interesting. The title of the work is framed by an altar showing symbols based on the Litany of Loreto. On top of the altar the Madonna of Loreto is depicted.<sup>77</sup>

### 1.4.3. Germany

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the first German translation of the Litany of Loreto was published at Dillingen in 1558 and approved by Pope Sixtus V. The author of this version was the Jesuit Peter Canisius. An interesting anecdote from the same period further shows the presence of the cult around Loreto in early modern Germany. Two young women of the Fugger family that lived in Augsburg seemed to be possessed by demons in 1568. Several Jesuit exorcists were taken in hand, but to no avail. One day, Ursula Fugger received a spirit telling her that one of the women should undertake a pilgrimage to Loreto and Rome in order to be cured. And well, in March 1570, when arrived in Rome via Loreto, the evil spirits left the body of one of the women. The condition of the other woman got worse. Petrus Canisius, who provided the first German translation of the Litany of Loreto, was called in to perform an exorcism on this woman. He got almost all the evil spirits expelled, but to drive out the one, she too had to go on a pilgrimage, to Altötting, which also houses a miraculous working image of the Madonna. Once there, one of the prayers that was recited was the Litany of Loreto.<sup>78</sup> The story of this miracle was

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<sup>75</sup> Torsellino, *The History of Our B. Lady of Loreto*.

<sup>76</sup> Jason Scott-Warren, “A chance discovery: Guest post by Jason Scott-Warren,” Cambridge University Library Special Collections, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://specialcollections-blog.lib.cam.ac.uk/?p=15246>.

<sup>77</sup> Torsellino, *The history of our B. Lady of Loreto*, frontispiece.

<sup>78</sup> Philip M. Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints: Counter-Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 119-123.

chronicled by a German theologian, Martin Eisengrein (1535-1578), in his work on the Madonna of Altötting, first published in 1571.<sup>79</sup> First, this recorded story shows that the cult around the Madonna of Loreto was present in Germany. In addition, it is interesting that the Madonna and the Litany of Loreto are mentioned in a publication about another miracle-working Madonna. This shows, again, that this cult and the use of the litany was flexible.

#### 1.4.4. Low Countries

It is highly likely that the cult of Loreto spread to the Low Countries also through the efforts of the Jesuits. For instance, the Antwerp Jesuits were fervent promoters of the Marian cult of Loreto.<sup>80</sup> The following quote, from a publication commemorating the first centenary of the Jesuit order from the seventeenth century, illustrates this:

“Niet langh nae dat de Societeyt te Loretten haere wooninghe ghestelt, ende aldaer de sorghe van het heylich huys aenghenomen hadde, heeftmen rondom de hoofden vande Patres die’r biechte hoorden eene hemelsche vlamme sien spelen: welcke wat isse doch anders gheweest dan een teecken van liefde, waer mede de H. Moeder haere gasten ontfingh, ende haere kinderen inden ijuer der sielen onstack?”<sup>81</sup>

This translates to: “Not long after the Society had established its home in Loreto, and had taken on the care of the Holy House there, people saw heavenly flames playing around the heads of the priests hearing confession: what else was it but a sign of love, with which the Holy Mother received her guests, and awakened her children in the zeal of souls?”

Another interesting primary source, confirming the presence and use of the Litany of Loreto in Antwerp at the beginning of the seventeenth century, is a manual for Jesuit sodalities devoted to

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>80</sup> Walter S. Melion, “Prayerful Artifice: The Fine Style as Marian Devotion in Hieronymus Wierix’s *Maria* of ca. 1611,” in *The Authority of the Word: Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe, 1400-1700*, ed. Celeste Brusati, Karl A. Elenkel and Walter Melion (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 601.

<sup>81</sup> Johannes Bolland, *Af-Beeldinghe van d'eerste eeuwe der Societeyt Iesu voor ooghen ghestelt door de Duyts-Nederlantsche provincie der seluer Societeyt*, trans. Laurentius Uwens and Dutch verses by Adrien Poirters (Antwerpen: Plantiinsche Druckeriie, 1640), 59. Consulted publication in the collection of the University of Illinois online via Internet Archive, see <https://archive.org/details/afbeeldinghevand00boll/page/398/mode/2up>.



the Virgin Mary. It contains prayers, and also the Litany of Loreto.<sup>82</sup> Under the title of the litany is stated that this litany is read most often after every meeting of the sodality.<sup>83</sup> This book is probably based on a slightly earlier and more comprehensive Jesuit handbook written in Latin by Thomas Saily.<sup>84</sup> This publication also contains the Litany of Loreto and states above the text that this litany is said and sung in the Loreto church.<sup>85</sup>

#### 1.4.5. *Outside of Europe*

In addition to work as pastors, teachers or researchers in church history or the natural sciences, the Jesuits devoted most of their attention to missionary work, also outside of Europe in the Americas, India, China and Japan, among others.<sup>86</sup> The Jesuits' mission work in the Early Modern Period is gaining increasing academic attention and facing valid critique.<sup>87</sup> Due to the scope and subject matter of this thesis, this topic will not be fully explored, but what is interesting is that the cult of the Virgin of Loreto was given priority in early modern Jesuit missions, next to the cults around the Madonna at Santa Maria Maggiore and the Madonna del Popolo. For example, in Paraguay, every mission had a Loreto chapel and in Japan the Litany of Loreto was recited daily at Jesuit schools.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Guilielmus de Pretere, *Handboeckken der sodaliteyt oft broederschap vande H. Maeghet Maria inghestelt inde Soci. Jesu* (Antwerpen: Hendrick Artssens, 1620), 198-200. Ruusbroecgenootschap, RG 3043 H 16.

<sup>83</sup> "Die men meest na de Vergaderinghe leest." Translates in English to: "Which men reads most often after a meeting."

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Saily, *Thesaurus precum et exercitiorum spiritualium* (Antwerpen: Officina Plantiniana, 1609), 285-287. Ruusbroecgenootschap, RG 3061 F17.

<sup>85</sup> "Litaniae Beatissimae Dei Genitricis Mariae, in sacra aede Lauretana dici & cantari solitae." Translates in English to: "Litanies of the Most Blessed Mother of God Mary, customarily said and sung in the sacred Loreto church."

<sup>86</sup> Kristina Krüger, *Kloosters en kloosterorden: 2000 jaar christelijke kunst en cultuur* (Königswinter: h.f. Ullman, 2008), 365.

<sup>87</sup> See recent publications such as Robert H. Jackson, *Regional conflict and demographic patterns on the Jesuit missions among the Guarani in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2019), Francimar Alex Lopes de Carvalho, *Missionizing on the edge: religion and power in the Jesuit missions of Spanish Amazonia* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2023) and Guillaume Alonge, *A history of Jesuit missions in Japan: Evangelization, miracles and martyrdom, 1549-1614* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2024).

<sup>88</sup> Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 8-9.

## 1.5. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to place the Madonna of Loreto and the Litany of Loreto in context by outlining their historical and religious background. Despite the fact that the cult around Loreto was not 'special' as there were many miraculous Madonnas and saints in early modern Catholic Europe, there is no denying the fame and widespread popularity of this cult in Europe at the end of the sixteenth and mainly in the seventeenth century. This fell within a wider phenomenon of the 'propagation' of cults encouraged by popes and religious orders as a countermovement to the Reformation. This is also the period in which the Wierix family's prints of the Litany of Loreto were created and published, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

In general, the cult around Loreto seems to be depicted in the visual arts in three different ways. First, the legend is regularly depicted as the Madonna with the Christ Child on a flying house. Second, the Madonna of Loreto is often depicted as a statue. Third, the titles of the Madonna, from the Litany of Loreto, are depicted as symbols. The latter kind seems to be the most interchangeably utilised in art, as it is also from its origins the 'least' connected to Loreto. This flexibility and adaptability can also be seen in the histories of the legend of the Holy House and the Madonna of Loreto, which may also explain the durability of this cult. The same seems to be true for the Litany of Loreto. This litany, with unclear origins, became associated with the cult around Loreto in the sixteenth century but, partly because of the universal nature of the text, it did not always have to be directly associated with the Madonna of Loreto or the Loreto shrine.

## 2. The prints of the Litany of Loreto by the Wierix family

### 2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter primarily investigated the Madonna of Loreto and the Litany of Loreto within a global context. This chapter shifts its focus to early modern Antwerp, where the Wierix family predominantly lived and worked between 1570 and 1620.<sup>89</sup> These were turbulent times for the city, strongly influenced by the Eighty Years War (1568-1648). Antwerp was in this period part of the Duchy of Brabant, which in turn was part of the Low Countries that comprised several regions and duchies (figure 2.1). The Low Countries were first part of the Holy Roman Empire during the Middle Ages and early modern times and later came under Spanish Habsburg, Catholic, rule.<sup>90</sup>

Between 1577 and 1585, Antwerp became the centre of the Calvinist revolt against Spanish rule.<sup>91</sup> The city joined the Union of Utrecht (1579), which was an alliance of northern Dutch provinces opposing Spain.<sup>92</sup> However, this was to no avail, as the city fell back into Spanish hands in 1585, an event which is known as the ‘Fall of Antwerp’. As a result, many Protestant residents of the city fled to the North.<sup>93</sup>

After the fall of Antwerp, the city remained under Spanish Hapsburgian control. Strict Catholic rule was introduced, and the Counter-Reformation gained a foothold with the reintroduction of Catholic customs and the restoration of churches and monasteries.<sup>94</sup> By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Low Countries were split into the Northern Netherlands and the Southern Netherlands (figure 2.2). The Northern Netherlands were also called the United Provinces or the Dutch Republic, and the Reformed church was the leading faith. The Southern Netherlands, under which Antwerp fell, was led by the Habsburg archdukes Albert and Isabella and the Catholic church was the dominant form of Christian faith.

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<sup>89</sup> Zsuzsanna van Ruyven-Zeman, in collab. with Marjolein Leesberg, “The Wierix Family: Introduction and guide to the catalogue,” *Hollstein’s Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700* LXIX, ed. Jan van der Stock and Marjolein Leesberg (Rotterdam: Sound & Vision Publishers, 2004), xi.

<sup>90</sup> Christine Kooi, *Reformation in the Low Countries, 1500-1620* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 15-17.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 141-144.

From 1609, the Twelve Year Truce was constituted between the rebellious Dutch provinces and Spain and lasted until 1621. This brought a period of relative peace and stability for Antwerp. Although there was some religious tolerance during the truce, Antwerp remained a Catholic stronghold under Spanish rule and the Catholic Church played a dominant role in the city's political and social life.<sup>95</sup>



Figure 2.1. The Low Countries in 1566



Figure 2.2. The Low Countries in 1609

It is important to keep this political and religious situation of the Wierix family's Antwerp in mind as this is the backdrop in which they created their works. This because the rest of this chapter will investigate the different prints that were created around the Litany of Loreto by the Wierix family, next to their place within the family's oeuvre.

On the Wierix family several catalogues have been published. One by Louis Alvin in 1867 and one by Marie Mauquoy-Hendrickx in 1978-1983.<sup>96</sup> In this thesis, the oeuvre catalogues on

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>96</sup> See Louis Alvin, *Catalogue raisonné des portraits gravés par les trois frères Wierix* (Brussels: Arnold, 1867) and Marie Mauquoy-Hendrickx, *Les estampes des Wierix conservées au Cabinet des Estampes de la Bibliothèque Royale Albert 1er*, 3 volumes (Brussels: Bibliothèque Royale Albert I, 1978-1983).

the Wierix family, part of the *Hollstein's Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts ca. 1450 – 1700* series, will be consulted since these are the most recent publications on the complete oeuvre, and contains extended biographical information on the family and new print attributions.<sup>97</sup>

## 2.2. The Wierix family

When talking about the Wierix family in this thesis, it refers to four male members of this family who were active in the early modern printing world: the brothers Johannes (Antwerp 1549 – Brussels c. 1620), Hieronymus (Antwerp 1553 – Antwerp buried 21 November 1619) and Antonius II (Antwerp 1555/1559 – Antwerp March 1604) and the son of Antonius II, Antonius III (Antwerp 1596 – Antwerp before 21 September 1624).<sup>98</sup> They were active between 1570 and 1620, as mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, and rank among the most famous engravers of Antwerp.<sup>99</sup> This section of the present chapter is divided into three sub-sections, which discuss biographical information and the work of the Wierix family with a focus on religious prints made by them.

### 2.2.1. Biographical information

Johannes, Hieronymus and Antonius II were the sons of the painter and cabinetmaker Antonius I (c. 1520/1525 – c. 1572). They were probably not trained by their father in the profession of engraving. It is supposed that Johannes and Hieronymus trained with an unknown goldsmith. The earliest work of Johannes dates c. 1561, when he was about twelve years old, and of Hieronymus c. 1565, also when he was around twelve years old. These works are copies after other engravings and were probably exercises part of their training as engravers. In 1572 or 1573 Johannes and Hieronymus registered at the Antwerp guild of Saint Luke as engravers. Their youngest brother, Antonius II, registered at the same guild in 1590 or 1591, but he was already active as an engraver by 1579.<sup>100</sup> The Antwerp publisher Hieronymus Cock (c. 1510/1520 – 1570) seems to have played an important role in the early careers of the Wierix brothers. It is very

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<sup>97</sup> See the volumes LIX-LXXI of the Hollstein's series for 13 books on the work of the Wierix family. These have been published between 2003 and 2004 by different compilers and editors. In this thesis I will refer to the separate Wierix volumes, but for information on the complete series see <https://www.hollstein.com/dutch-en-flemish.html>.

<sup>98</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, "The Wierix Family: introduction and guide to the catalogue," xi.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, xv-xvi.

likely that he was the person who provided the brothers with the original engravings after which they made their copies.<sup>101</sup> All three of the brothers were, next to their work, famous for their lawless behaviour. For example, Hieronymus killed the wife of an innkeeper by throwing a beer jug at her.<sup>102</sup> According to Christophe Plantin (c. 1520 – 1589) the brothers would go out and spend everything they had just earned with a few days' work.<sup>103</sup> It is also known that the three brothers were sometimes haunted by creditors for being in debt. Antonius II is even documented as having pawned his own copperplates in 1595 and 1597.<sup>104</sup>

Johannes, other than his two brothers, spend most of his time outside of Antwerp. Already in 1575, he was renting a house in Delft and had left the Southern Netherlands. He returned to Antwerp to marry in 1576 but was back in Delft between 1577 and 1579. In Delft, Johannes made portraits of prominent individuals, captured his surroundings and produced religious works. He also acted as a teacher and his pupils included Michiel Jansz. van Mierevelt (1567-1641), Willem Jacobsz. Delff (1580-1638) and Hendrick Hondius (1573-1650). Records show that between 1581 and 1595 Johannes returned to Antwerp, but only to leave the city again for Brussels where he was documented in 1609.<sup>105</sup>

Less is known about the lives of Hieronymus and Antonius II. So far, it seems that they mainly remained in Antwerp. Antonius II was travelling for work in 1601, but it is not known where.<sup>106</sup>

On the second generation of the Wierix family, mainly Antonius III, the son of Antonius II, little source material is available. It seems that Antonius III has studied with his uncle Hieronymus. He frequently engraved replicas or variants of Hieronymus work, but also published works of his own. His work consists mainly of small devotional prints, in line with the later work of his uncle Hieronymus, which will be discussed in more detail in the following sub-sections.<sup>107</sup>

### *2.2.2. The Wierix brothers at work*

The Wierix brothers were in part active as reproductive engravers, resulting in a portion of their work being reproductions of contemporary Netherlandish and Italian artists, primarily published

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., xv-xvi.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., xliii.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., xx.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., xxv.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., xvi-xviii.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., xxxii.

by Antwerp publishers.<sup>108</sup> These prints after famous paintings were mainly commissioned to disseminate famous iconographic models and served as collector's items.<sup>109</sup> In addition to these reproductions, portraits formed an important segment alongside moralizing, Christian allegories.<sup>110</sup> The Wierix brothers also worked after their own designs.<sup>111</sup> These were primarily prints in the smallest format and signed with *fecit et excudit*. However, sometimes the signatures are not entirely reliable, as some prints are copies of larger and earlier works but omit this in the signing.<sup>112</sup> The majority of their own work was protected by privileges against copying, granted by the Brussels administration. This can be recognized on the prints by the inscription *Cum gratia et Privilegio*, often followed by the name of the secretary of the Council of Brabant, Buschere or Piermans. Other names that appear on the prints are De Wit or J. Cools. Very rare are the privileges from the Habsburg Archduke Albert, granted only to two prints by Johannes. Next to etching after their own designs, the brothers sometimes also published prints themselves.<sup>113</sup>

The engraving style of the brothers can be described as fine and delicate, based on the older northern tradition of Albrecht Dürer (1471 – 1528) and Lucas van Leyden (1494 – 1533). The majority of the prints in the Wierix oeuvre was engraved by Hieronymus, followed by Antonius II, Johannes and then Antonius III.<sup>114</sup> Their favourite designer to work with was Maarten de Vos (1532 – 1603), with nearly 340 plates identified after his designs. Following him come designers Johannes Stradanus (1523 – 1605), Crispijn van den Broeck (1524 – c. 1589/1591), Gerard van Groeningen (1550 – 1599) and Ambrosius Francken (c. 1544 – 1618).<sup>115</sup>

The work of the brothers were published by several publishers such as Gerard de Jode (c. 1516/1517 – 1591), Philips Galle (c. 1537 – 1612), Johannes Baptista Vrints (active c. 1557 – 1611/1612), and Hans van Luyck (c. 1518 – after c. 1580). Some publishers seemed to have had a 'favourite' brother, with Galle and Van Luyck employing Hieronymus the most, and Van Hoeswinckel favouring Antonius II.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., xviii.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., xx.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., xxviii.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., xviii.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., xxi.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., xxi.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., xviii.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., xviii.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., xx.

The three brothers also cooperated on series with each other and other engravers such as Adriaen Collaert (c. 1560-1618) and Johannes Collaert (c. 1620 – 1670), Harmen Muller (1540-1617), Crispijn de Passe (1564 – 1637).<sup>117</sup>

Besides engravings, drawings of the brothers have also survived, particularly from Johannes. Many of his signed drawings are known, some of them executed on precious materials such as vellum, suggesting they were sold separately as works of art and not intended as designs for prints.<sup>118</sup>

### 2.2.3. *Religious prints*

Next to reproductions of the work of other master's and portraits, all three brothers engraved religious prints. These prints comprise by far the largest part of their oeuvre. The religious subjects were derived from the Old and New Testaments, but also angels, evangelists, apostles, church fathers and all kinds of saints have been engraved by the Wierix brothers. The brothers were listed as Lutherans in 1585, but this is not reflected in their oeuvre.<sup>119</sup>

Work of the Wierix brothers was commissioned by several religious orders, such as the Carmelite, the Dominican, the Franciscan, the Augustine and Cistercian order. These congregations commissioned these prints for distribution among their members. Especially the Jesuit order seems to have had a big influence on the work of the Wierix brothers, reflected amongst others by their illustrations for the meditation book by the Spanish Jesuit Jerónimo Nadal, *Evangelicae historiae imagines*. This influence is also evident in other loose sheets and series with subjects including the cults relating to Jesus, the Virgin, the guardian angels, and the saints and martyrs of the Jesuit order.<sup>120</sup> In 1640, when it had been a few years since the Wierix brothers and Antonius III had passed away, the Wierixes are mentioned in the beginning of a poem, alongside Albrecht Dürer, in the earlier mentioned publication commemorating the first centenary of the Jesuit order:

“Mijn pers die is vermaert door al de fijnste plaeten  
Die ons oft Albert Duer, oft Wiericks heeft ghelaeten,  
Oft die noch heden ‘sdaeghs een konstigh meester snijdt:

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., xx.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., xl-xli.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., xxviii.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., xxviii.



Want seldom isser konst ghestorven met den tijdt.”<sup>121</sup>

English translation:

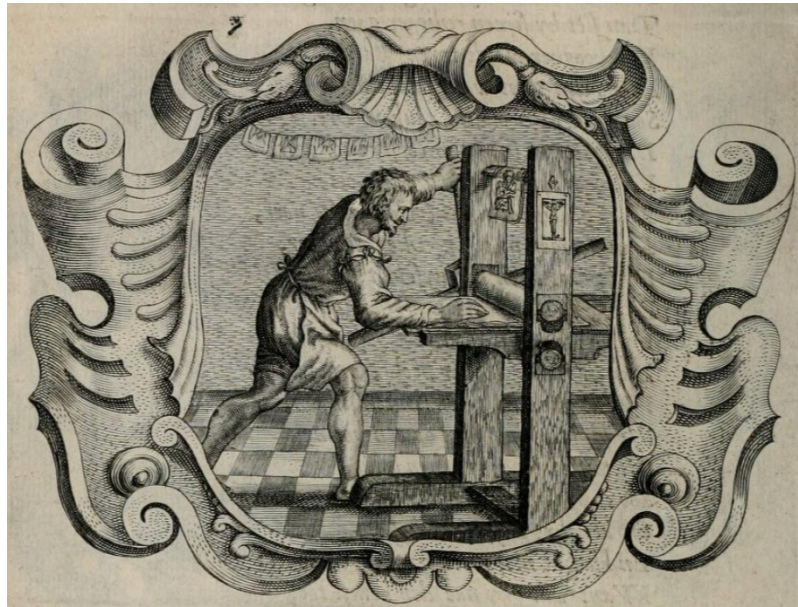
“My press is famous for its finest plates

Left to us by Albert Dürer or Wierix,

Or still cut today by a skillful master:

For rarely art has died in the course of time.”<sup>122</sup>

This poem is accompanied by the emblem of a printer busy with the printing of devotional prints (figure 2.3.). On the side of the printing press is a print of Christ on the cross fastened with two nails. Draped over a beam of the printing press hangs an impression depicting the Madonna and Christ.



**Figure 2.3.** Cornelis Galle, emblem of printing in *Af-Beeldinghe van d'eerste eeuw der Societeyt Iesu voor ooghen ghestelt door de Duyts-Nederlantsche provincie der seluer Societeyt*, 1640.

Mainly Hieronymus was active in the genre of small-scale Catholic devotional prints as an engraver, increasingly from seventeenth century onwards, which seems to coincide with the fall

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<sup>121</sup> Johannes Bolland, *Af-Beeldinghe van d'eerste eeuw der Societeyt Iesu*, 398.

<sup>122</sup> Paul Begheyn, “The collection of copperplates by members of the Wierix family in the Jesuit church ‘De Krijtberg’ in Amsterdam,” *Quaerendo* 31, no. 3 (2001): 196.

of Antwerp.<sup>123</sup> The engraving of these small prints was not a major investment, and the same design was frequently repeated. It could be that such a copy was made after a copperplate that was worn-out. This could also mean that these types of prints were in high demand.<sup>124</sup>

It is interesting to note that among the original Wierix' copperplates, that have survived, the largest number are of small religious devotional prints. These are held by the Carmelite Convent in Brussels and the Society of Jesus in Brussels and Amsterdam. It might be that these religious orders were the commissioners of the prints and therefore hold the copperplates, but more research is needed on this topic. One of the plates in the possession of the Jesuits in Amsterdam is a print of the Virgin with symbols of the Litany of Loreto.<sup>125</sup> It only surfaced in 2000 when at a vacancy of the Jesuit presbytery De Krijtberg in Amsterdam, a Jesuit priest retrieved a cardboard box from his room containing seventy-five copperplates attributed to Hieronymus and Antonius II.<sup>126</sup>

### 2.3. The prints

Now that the Madonna of Loreto and the Litany of Loreto have been introduced in the first chapter, and the Wierix family covered in the first two sections of this chapter, it is time to take a closer look at the prints of the Litany of Loreto. The prints will be discussed one by one in separate sections, in chronological order. Six prints with the Litany of Loreto have so far been attributed to the Wierix family, one of them to Antonius II and the remaining five to Hieronymus Wierix. A seventh print is also briefly cited at the end of this section, but unfortunately it is now untraceable in the collection where it is kept and no images of it are known. Therefore, it is not included any further in this thesis.

It is important to stress that these prints are not part of series of prints and are scattered across the collections of different museums in Europe and the United States. The prints are all loose sheet prints, selected on the fact that they all contain the text or symbols of the Litany of Loreto combined with an image of the Madonna. It is vital to bear in mind here that the original context of these prints has unfortunately been lost. Because the prints are in several European and American collections, it has not been possible to view them all in real life due to the scope of

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<sup>123</sup> Yvonne Bleyerveld, "Van de tiran verlost: het boekje *Tyrannorum praemia*. Den loon der tyrannen van Willem van Haecht (1578)," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 52 (2001): 146.

<sup>124</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, "The Wierix Family: introduction and guide to the catalogue," xxiii.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiv.

<sup>126</sup> Begheyn, "The collection of copperplates by members of the Wierix family in the Jesuit church 'De Krijtberg' in Amsterdam," 192.

this thesis. The most important sources in discussing these prints, besides the prints themselves, is the information collected by museums and the Hollstein catalogue in which all six prints are included.

### 2.3.1. Print 1: *The Annunciation with prayers (among which the Litany of Loreto)*

The earliest dated print attributed to Hieronymus Wierix which includes the Litany of Loreto can be dated before 1595 (figure 2.4.) This dating is based on a copy of this print, published by Johan Bussemacher, with an inscription of 1595.<sup>127</sup> The Annunciation is depicted in the middle of the print, within a rosary. The rosary consists of five rose shaped beads, between which there are ten beads each. At the bottom of the rosary hangs a cross, containing a medallion with the portrait of the Madonna attached. Around this medallion is printed the following dedicatory inscription: *Sodalibus D.V. Mariae D.D. Hieronymus Wierix*. Around the rosary, four angels are depicted holding and distributing to two groups of kneeling men in a praying position. The foremost men can be seen holding a rosary between their folded hands.

This image is surrounded by four frames which depict prayers. The upper frame states *QVINDECIM MYSTERIA ROSARII* with an enumeration of the mysteries in three columns of five lines each. In the columns of the left and right side of the Annunciation the text of the Litany of Loreto is printed. The litany is concluded with a *Versiculus*.<sup>128</sup> In the lower frame *OREMVS* is followed by a prayer in two columns of five lines each.<sup>129</sup> The bottom of this print is inscribed with *Hieronymus Wierix fecit et excudit*.

The print consulted for the above description (figure 2.4.) is in the collection of the British Museum and, unfortunately, I have not been able to see it. Online, it appears to be in good condition as no signs of use can be detected such as holes, folds or handwritten inscriptions.

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<sup>127</sup> Zsuzsanna van Ruyven-Zeman, in collab. with Marjolein Leesberg, “The Wierix Family: Part V,” *Hollstein’s Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700* LXIII, ed. Jan van der Stock and Marjolein Leesberg (Rotterdam: Sound & Vision Publishers, 2004), 163.

<sup>128</sup> A ‘versiculus,’ or ‘versicle’ in English, is a short sentence which is sung antiphonally, mostly in church by a choir, and answered by the congregation. See “Versicle,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. Andrew Louth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), online via <https://www-oxfordreference-com.utrechtuniversity.idm.oclc.org/display/10.1093/acref/9780199642465.001.0001/acref-9780199642465-e-7520>.

<sup>129</sup> ‘Oremus’ is the invitation to prayer, used in church by the officiant before prayer. See David J. Kennedy, “Oremus,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Robert E. Bjork (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), online via <https://www-oxfordreference-com.utrechtuniversity.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662624.001.0001/acref-9780198662624-e-4345>.

Of this print four states are known. The first state is almost the same as described above, but the foremost men, part of the two groups of devotees, do not hold a rosary in their hands. An impression of this state is in the collection of Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I in Brussels. The second state is as described above and of this state four impressions are in Brussels. The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, The British Museum in London and the Louvre in Paris hold one impression. The third state is reworked all over. Brussels holds three impressions of this state, Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris owns two impressions and one impression is owned by Cambridge, The British Museum in London, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung in Munich, Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, Grapische Sammlung Albertina in Vienna and Fürstlich zu Waldburg-Wolfegg'sche Kunstsammlungen in Wolfegg. The fourth state is reworked another time and much worn. An impression of this state is in the collection of Brussels and Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg in Coburg. Four copies of this print by Hieronymus are known.<sup>130</sup> The copies of the six Wierix prints described in this chapter will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The copperplate of this print is in the collection of the Dutch Jesuits.<sup>131</sup>

This print is accompanied by another print which shows, also within a rosary, the circumcision of Jesus with prayers, among which a litany dedicated to Jesus. Below the cross of the rosary another dedicatory inscription is printed: *Societati N. (s) IESV D.D. Hieronymus Wierx.* This could point to the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. Especially considering that the copperplate of the Annunciation with the Litany of Loreto is in the possession of Dutch Jesuits. Unfortunately, the copperplate of the circumcision print has been sold and the current whereabouts are unknown.<sup>132</sup>

### 2.3.2. *Print 2: Our Lady of Loreto with the symbols of the Litany of Loreto*

This is the only print that features the Litany of Loreto which can be attributed to Antonius Wierix II (figure 2.5.). It is dated before 1604, since this is the year in which Antonius II passed away. The inscription *Anton. Wierx. excud.* supports the conclusion that Antonius II has published the print. It is not known whether Antonius II was also responsible for the design and engravings visible in the print. In the middle of this print the viewer can see the Virgin and Child on top of the roof of a house. In the margins of the image the legend of the Holy House of Loreto is

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<sup>130</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, "The Wierix Family: Part V," 163.

<sup>131</sup> Begheyn, "The collection of copperplates by members of the Wierix family in the Jesuit church 'De Krijtberg' in Amsterdam," 203.

<sup>132</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, "The Wierix Family: Part V," 164.

depicted. On the left is depicted how the Holy House with the Madonna and Child is lifted by angels. Beneath the Holy House, two men can be seen sword fighting. On the right, in the sky, the flight of the house with the help of two angels is depicted. On the lower right, the beholder can see how the house lands in a forest. Around this image, twenty-two titles from the Litany of Loreto are depicted in three columns, to the left, right and at the top of the image, with the corresponding titles in Latin underneath.

In the column below the centre image is inscribed *TABERNACVLVM DEI CVM HOMINIBVS. Apoc. cap. 21*. This refers to a sentence from the last book of the New Testament, the book Apocalypse or Revelation 21:3, “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.”<sup>133</sup> Of this print there is just one state known. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam holds an impression and the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. No copies are known.<sup>134</sup> The impression at the Rijksmuseum has been studied by the author, it shows no signs of usage such as folds or small holes.

### 2.3.3. *Print 3: Our Lady of Loreto with prayers*

On this print, the Madonna of Loreto is depicted in the middle with the Christ Child in her arms (figure 2.6.). This print can be dated around 1605 based on the presence of the coat of arms of pope Leo XI who was in office in this year.<sup>135</sup> The Madonna and the Christ Child are lit by two chandeliers and candles held by two angels. They are enveloped by a richly decorated fabric over which a double chain is draped. They stand on a platform flanked by twisted pillars. The platform is adorned with the coat of arms of pope Leo XI. In the four corners of the image the coat of arms of the dedicatee Octavio Frangipano Mytro (1544-1612), can be seen.

This image is surrounded by text. Along the upper edge of the prints is inscribed with *LITANIAE QVAE SINGVLIS DIEBVS SABBATHI ET FESTIS B. (M AE) MARIAE CANVNTVR IN S. (MA) AEDE LAVRETANA*. This translates to: “The litanies sung on the days of the Sabbath and feast days of the Virgin Mary in the temple (church) of Loreto.”<sup>136</sup> So

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<sup>133</sup> The Bible consulted in this thesis is *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, with an introduction and notes by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>134</sup> Zsuzsanna van Ruyven-Zeman, in collab. with Marjolein Leesberg, “The Wierix Family: Part IV,” *Hollstein’s Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700* LXII, ed. Jan van der Stock and Marjolein Leesberg (Rotterdam: Sound & Vision Publishers, 2004), 238.

<sup>135</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, “The Wierix Family: Part V,” 169.

<sup>136</sup> I want to thank Philip Muijtens for providing the translation.

this is a descriptive sentence about the use of the litany. A prayer is written below. In the columns to the left and to the right the text Litany of Loreto is written, concluded with a versicle. Directly below the image, the text for a second prayer is given, preceded by OREMVS. Under this prayer a dedicatory inscription is written: *Ill. (mo) et R. (mo) D. Octauio Frangipano Mytro, Episcopo Trica= ricensi, Ecclesiae Tarentinae Archiepiscopo designato Nuncio Apostolico per Belgium D. D. Hieron. Wierx*. This translates to: “To the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Octavio Frangipano Mytro, Bishop of Tricarico, designated Archbishop of the Church of Taranto, Apostolic Nuncio to Belgium, dedicated by Hieronymus Wierix.” Thus, this inscription mentions the name of the print’s commissioner, Ottavio Mirto Frangipani, and the print’s designer, Hieronymus Wierix. The print is signed at the bottom left with *Hieronymus Wierx fecit et excud*. Next to this is inscribed *Cum Gratia et Priuilegio. Buschere*.

There are no other states known of this print. Impressions of this print are in several collections. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Victoria & Albert Museum in London hold an impression that is cut down to the image, Stedelijk Prentenkabinet in Antwerp holds an impression of which the upper right corner is missing, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I in Brussels holds three impressions, Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris and Graphische Sammlung Albertina in Vienna two impressions, the British Museum in London, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and Fürstlich zu Waldburg-Wolfegg’sche Kunstsammlungen in Wolfegg hold one impression.<sup>137</sup> The cut down version in Amsterdam have been seen by the author and apart that the print has been cut no other signs of usage could be detected. The impression in the British Museum (figure 2.6.) has on the bottom left a yellow stain.

#### 2.3.4. Print 4: *The Virgin with symbols of the Litany of Loreto*

This print, depicting the Madonna standing on a crescent moon is dated before 1611 by the Hollstein catalogue (figure 2.7.).<sup>138</sup> It unfortunately does not mention the source of this dating, but it might very well be that this dating is based on the year of death of Johannes Baptista Vrints, 1611 or 1612, the publisher of the print. Above the Madonna God the Father is depicted. Under Mary a dragon is depicted. Titles from the Litany of Loreto can be recognized by the viewer as symbols, integrated in the landscape. To the left and right of the Madonna the print is signed with *M. de Vos invent. I.B. Vrints excu.* and *Hi. W. sculp.* These inscriptions thus make it

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, “The Wierix Family: Part IV,” 238.

clear that Maarten de Vos created the design, Hieronymus Wierix produced the engraving and Johannes Baptista Vrints published the print. The following text is printed at the bottom of the engraving: *VIRGO PARENS DILECTA DEO, INVIDIOSA DRACON(?) CHRISTICOLAS INTER TOTA DECORA NITES*. This translates to: “Virgin and mother, chosen by God, with the hateful dragon, you shine on Christians in the midst of all your virtues.”<sup>139</sup>

A piece of the text is lost due to a stamp of a crown. This probably is a stamp of Kupferstichkabinett der Staatliche Kunstsammlungen in Dresden, where the print is in the collection. Under this stamp the object number A 47745 has been typed. In the upper right corner, the number forty-five is visible. This numbers appears to have been put on top of the impression later, as lines can be seen through the ink. On the online photo no other signs of usage can be detected. No other impressions of this print are known, no copies and nothing about the copperplate is mentioned in the Hollstein catalogue.<sup>140</sup>

### 2.3.5. Print 5: *Virgin Mary flanked by symbols of the Litany of Loreto*

This fifth print depicts the Madonna, with an aureole made of stars around her head, floating on a crescent moon, flanked by ten symbols of the Litany of Loreto (figure 2.8.). This engraving is dated before 1612, probably after the year of death of the print’s publisher Philip Galle.<sup>141</sup> The Madonna appears to be depicted as some kind of apparition, shrouded in what could either be clouds or smoke. Above the Madonna the Holy Trinity is visible, with God the Father holding Jesus on the cross and the Holy Spirit as a dove right under them. On their lower left the moon is depicted, on their lower right the sun. Under the Madonna lies a reclining dragon. The engraving is signed, below the image, with *Joannes Stradanus inventor. Hieronymus Wierix scalpsit. Philippus Galle excudit*. These signatures make it clear that Joannes Stradanus made the design, Hieronymus Wierix the engraving and Philip Galle printed the print. The impression seen by the author in the Rijksmuseum has no signs of use.

Of this engraving two states are known. The first state is as described above. Impressions of this first state are in the collections of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I Brussels, Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg in Coburg, Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen, The British Museum in London, Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, Fürstlich zu Waldburg-Wolfegg’sche

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<sup>139</sup> I want to thank Philip Muijtjens for providing the translation.

<sup>140</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, “The Wierix Family: Part IV,” 238.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

Kunstsammlungen in Wolfegg and Graphische Sammlung Albertina in Vienna which holds two impressions. Impressions of the second state of this print, with reworked border lines and sky, are in the collections in Brussels, Paris and Vienna. Of this print six copies are known. The Hollstein catalogue entry references two presumed preparatory sketches by Joannes Stradanus in the collection of the Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York, but unfortunately, these have not been located.<sup>142</sup>

### 2.3.6. Print 6: *Virgin Mary flanked by symbols of the Litany of Loreto*

This sixth print depicts the Madonna on a crescent moon, flanked by eight symbols of the Litany of Loreto (figure 2.9.). This printed is dated before 1619, the year of death of Hieronymus. Above the Madonna the Holy Trinity is depicted, with to the left Christ, in the middle the Holy Spirit and to the right God the Father. Christ and God the Father can be seen sitting on clouds. Diagonally below Christ is depicted the sun and diagonally below God the moon. The Madonna seems almost like an apparition as she is depicted enveloped in what could either be interpreted as clouds or smoke. Eleven cherubs are depicted in the streams of mist, four of them with shields holding back arrows fired by a group of animals at the bottom left and right of the print. A reclining dragon is depicted under the Madonna's feet. Below this image is located the following text: *Quae est is ta quae progreditur quasi aurora consurgens, pulcra vt luna, electa vt sol, terribilis vt castrorum acies ordinate.* This translates to: "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."<sup>143</sup> This is a passage from the Old Testament, the book Song of Songs, also Song of Solomon, 6:10. Below this text the engraving is signed with *Hieronymus Wierx fecit et excud. Cum Gratia et Privilegio. Buschere.*

Of this print, two states are known. One impression of the first state can be found in Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I in Brussels. This state does not include the Latin text. The second state is as described above, with five impressions in Brussels, two impressions can be found in Graphische Sammlung Albertina in Vienna and Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris. The following museums own one impression: the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, Szépművészeti Múzeum in Budapest, Kunstsammlungen der Veste in Coburg, Kupferstichkabinett der Staatliche Kunstsammlungen in Dresden, Biblioteka Naukova PAU I

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Translation provided by Victoria & Albert Museum. See "The Virgin with Symbols of the Litany of Loreto," Victoria & Albert Museum, accessed July 26, 2024, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O119836/the-virgin-with-symbols-of-print-wierix-jerome-hieronymous/>.



PAN w in Kraków, the British Museum in London, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart in Stuttgart and Fürstlich zu Waldburg-Wolfegg'sche Kunstsammlungen in Wolfegg. The copperplate of this engraving is in the collection of the Dutch Jesuits.<sup>144</sup> Of this print one copy is known.<sup>145</sup> The impression studied by the author at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam appears to be in good condition as signs of usage or damage could be detected.

### *2.3.7. A missing print*

The Hollstein catalogue references another print depicting the Madonna with symbols of the Litany of Loreto. This print is also believed to have been engraved by Hieronymus Wierix after a design by Johannes Stradanus, and therefore dates to before 1619. It closely resembles the sixth print, described right above this sub section, but with some slight differences: the stars are black, the head of the Holy Spirit (represented by the dove) is turned to the left. Unfortunately, the one impression known of this print could not be located by the staff of Schlossmuseum in Gotha.<sup>146</sup> The Wierix catalogue by Marie Mauquoy-Hendrickx unfortunately also does not contain an image of this print.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Begheyn, "The collection of copperplates by members of the Wierix family in the Jesuit church 'De Krijtberg' in Amsterdam," 201.

<sup>145</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, "The Wierix Family: Part IV," 234.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>147</sup> Mauquoy-Hendrickx, *Les estampes des Wierix*, 127.

Litaniae B.V.  
Lauretanae

Kyrie eleison  
Christe eleison  
Christe audi nos  
Christe exaudi nos  
Pater de caelis Deus  
miserere nobis  
Fili redemptor mundi  
Deus, Spiritus  
Sancte Deus, Sancta  
Trinitas unus  
Deus, miserere nobis  
S. Maria ora pro nobis  
S. Dei genitrix o. p. n.  
Mater Christi  
Mater divinae gratiae  
Mater purissima  
Mater castissima  
Mater inuiolata  
Mater intemerata  
Mater amabilis  
Mater admirabilis  
Mater Creatoris  
Mater Salvatoris  
Virgo prudentissima  
Virgo veneranda  
Virgo praedicanda  
Virgo potens  
Virgo clemens  
Virgo fidelis  
Speculum Iustitiae  
Sedes Sapientiae  
Causa nostrae letitiae  
Vas Spirituale

QUINDECIM MYSTERIA ROSARII

Annunciatio  
Visitatio Elisabeth  
Natiuitas Christi  
Oblatio Christi in templo  
Inuentio Christi in templo

Oratio in horto  
Flagellatio  
Coronatio  
Crucis portatio  
Crucifixio

Resurrectio  
Ascensio Christi  
Missio S. Spiritus  
Assumptio B. Mariae  
Coronatio B. Mariae.



Sodalibus D.V. Mariae  
D.D. Hieronymus  
Wierx.

Vas honorabile  
Vas insigne deuotionis  
Rosa mystica  
Turris Dauidica  
Turris eburnea  
Domus aurea  
Foederis arca  
Ianua Coeli  
Stella matutina  
Salus infirmorum  
Refugium peccatorum  
Consolatio afflictorum  
Auxilium Christianorum  
Regina Angelorum  
Regina Patriarcharum  
Regina Prophetarum  
Regina Apostolorum  
Regina Martyrum  
Regina Confessorum  
Regina Virginum  
Regina SS. omnium  
Agnus Dei qui tollis  
peccata mundi parce  
nobis Domine.  
Agnus Dei qui tollis  
peccata mundi exaudi  
nos Domine.  
Agnus Dei qui tollis  
peccata mundi miserere  
nobis.

Versiculus

Angelus Domini  
nunciauit Mariae.  
Et concepit de  
Spiritu Sancto.

OREMVS

Gratiam tuam quaesumus Domine mentibus nostris  
infunde, vt qui Angelo nunciante Christi filij tui  
incarnationem cognouimus per passionem eius et  
crucem ad Resurrectionis gloriam perducamur.  
Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum Amen.

Defende quaesumus Domine B. Maria semper  
virgine intercedente istam ab omni aduersita-  
te familiam, et toto corde tibi prostratam ab  
hostium propitius tuere clementer insidijs.  
Per Christum Dominum nostrum Amen.

Hieronymus Wierx fecit et excudit.

Figure 2.4. (1) Hieronymus Wierix, *The Annunciation with prayers*, before 1595. Engraving on paper, 13.4 x 9.7 cm.

The British Museum, London. Object number: 1859,0709.3019.



Figure 2.5. (2) Antonius II Wierix, *Our Lady of Loreto amid symbols of the Litany of Loreto*, before 1604. Engraving on paper, 10.8 x 7.7 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Object number: RP-P-1904-1242.

LITANIÆ QUÆ SINGVLIS DIEBV[S] SABBATHI ET  
FESTIS B. MARIE CANVNTVR IN S. ÆDE LAVRETANA.

**K**yrrie eleison.  
Christe eleison.  
Christe audi nos.  
Christe exaudi nos.  
Pater de cælis Deus,  
Miserere nobis.  
Fili redemptor mundi  
Deus, mis. nobis.  
Spiritus sancte Deus,  
miserere nobis.  
Sancta Trinitas vnus  
Deus, mis. nobis.  
Sancta Maria, ora  
pro nobis.  
Sancta Dei genitrix,  
ora pro nobis.  
Sancta Virgo Virg. ora.  
Mater Christi, ora.  
Mater Dni grat. ora.  
Mater purissima, ora.  
Mater castissima, ora.  
Mater inuoluta, ora.  
Mater intemerata, ora.  
Mater amabilis, ora.  
Mater admirabilis, ora.  
Mater Creatoris, ora.  
Mater Saluatoris, ora.  
Virgo prudentissima, ora.  
Virgo veneranda, ora.  
Virgo predicanda, ora.  
Virgo potens, ora.  
Virgo clemens, ora.  
Virgo fidelis, ora.  
Speculum iustitiæ, ora.  
Sedes sapientiæ, ora.  
Causa nostræ letitiæ, ora.  
Vas spirituale, ora.

O Domina mea S.<sup>ta</sup> Maria me in tuam benedictam fidem,  
ac singularem custodiam, et in sinum misericordiæ tuæ,  
hodie, et quotidie, et in hora exitus mei, et animam meam,  
et corpus meum tibi commendo, omnem spem meam, conso-  
lationem meam, omnes angustias et miseras meas, vitam et  
finem vitæ meæ tibi committo: vt per tuam sanctissimam  
intercessionem, et per tua merita, omnia mea dirigantur et as-  
ponantur opera, secundum tuam, tuq[ue] filij voluntatem. Amen.



Vas honorabile, ora.  
Vas insigne deuotionis, ora.  
Rosa mystica, ora.  
Turris Davidica, ora.  
Turris eburnea, ora.  
Domus aurea, ora.  
Fœderis Arca, ora.  
Ianua Cæli, ora.  
Stella matutina, ora.  
Salus infirmorum, ora.  
Refugium peccatorum, ora.  
Consolatrix afflictorum, ora.  
Auxilium Christianorum,  
ora pro nobis.  
Regina Angelorum, ora.  
Regina Patriarchar. ora.  
Regina Prophetar. ora.  
Regina Apostolorum, ora.  
Regina Martyrum, ora.  
Regina Confessorum, ora.  
Regina Virginum, ora.  
Regina Sanctorum om-  
nium, ora pro nobis.  
Agnus Dei, qui tollis  
peccata mundi, parce  
nobis Domine.  
Agnus Dei, qui tollis  
peccata mundi, exaudi  
nos Domine.  
Agnus Dei, qui tollis  
peccata mundi,  
miserere nobis.

Verficulus.

Angelus Domini  
nunciauit Mariæ,  
et concepit de  
Spiritu sancto.

OREMVS.

Gratiam tuam quæsumus Domine, mentibus nostris  
infunde, vt qui Angelo nunciante, Christi filij tui  
incarnationem cognouimus, per passionem eius  
et crucem, ad resurrectionis gloriam perducamur.  
Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Defende quæsumus Domine, B. Maria semper  
Virgine intercedente, is tam ab omni aduersitate  
familiam, et toto corde tibi prostratam ab  
h[oc] tui propitijs tuere clementer insidijs.  
Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Ill.<sup>mo</sup> et R.<sup>mo</sup> D. Octauio Frangipano Myrto, Episcopo Trica-  
ricensi, Ecclesiæ Tarentinæ Archiepiscopo designato,  
Nuncio Apostolico per Belgium D.D. Hieron. Wierx.

Hieronymus Wierx fecit et excud.

Cum Gratia, et Priuilegio. Buschere.

Figure 2.6. (3) Hieronymus Wierix, *Our Lady of Loreto with prayers*, c. 1605. Engraving on paper, 17.3 x 11.2 cm.

The British Museum, London. Object number: 1863,0509.650.



Figure 2.7. (4) Engraved by Hieronymus Wierix after Maarten de Vos, *The Virgin with symbols of the Litany of Loreto*, before 1611. Engraving on paper, 11.3 x 9 cm. Kupferstichkabinett der Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden. Object number:

A 47745.



**Figure 2.8.** (5) Hieronymus Wierix after Joannes Stradanus, *Virgin Mary flanked by symbols of the Litany of Loreto*, before 1612. Engraving on paper, 19.9 x 13.9 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Object number: RP-P-1906-1768.



**Figure 2.9.** (6) Hieronymus Wierix, *Virgin Mary flanked by symbols of the Litany of Loreto*, before 1619. Engraving on paper, 15.4 x 10.7 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Object number: RP-P-1904-772.

## 2.4. Comparing and analysing the prints

Now that above the prints have been described one by one, are there any similarities to be noticed? Or are there major differences to be seen? On various points, the six prints are compared and analysed in this section.

### 2.4.1. *Material aspects and signs of usage*

A first aspect on which the prints actually all seem to align with each other is that they are quite small. The fifth print has the largest size of all the prints as its measurements are 19.9 x 13.9 cm. The size of this is similar to a modern A5 size, just slightly smaller. The other prints are similar in size to that of an A6. Furthermore, the prints, which I have studied at the Rijksmuseum, are printed on thin paper which could mean that the prints in their original contexts were relatively affordable.

A second aspect that the six prints share is that the ones I have seen in the online collections of the previously mentioned museums and at the Rijksmuseum print room all appear to be in good condition. I have not detected any signs of usage such as creases, fingerprints or small holes, except for stamps or numbers of collections. An explanation for their good condition could be that some of the prints viewed have been restored. But perhaps these prints were kept by their owners, for example, in a prayer book or in a chest. The possible uses of the prints will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

### 2.4.2. *Depictions of the Madonna*

One aspect that stands out when comparing the prints is the way the Madonna is depicted in all six prints. Two of the six prints, through the image of the Madonna, are directly associated with the Loreto cult. This is the case in the second (figure 2.5.) and third print (figure 2.6.). On the second print, the legend of the Holy House is depicted and on the third print the statue of the Madonna of Loreto. As described in the first chapter, these are the two standard iconographical ways in which the cult around Loreto is generally depicted.

The earliest print of the six shows the Madonna in the Annunciation scene (figure 2.4.). This does tie in with the legend surrounding the Holy House as the Annunciation is said to have taken place there. The text of the Litany of Loreto was placed around this image, but it remains speculative whether this was done because of the connection of the litany with Loreto and the Holy House. Hieronymus Wierix could also have chosen the Litany of Loreto because it was the only officially approved litany in relation to the Madonna.



In three of the six prints, the similarity between the image of the Madonna is significant (figures 2.7, 2.8. and 2.9.). In all three depictions of the Madonna, we see her depicted with loose hair, in a loose-fitting robe, with a halo of twelve stars above her head. A reclining dragon is depicted below the Madonna. In the first of these three prints (figure 2.7.), she appears to be still on the ground, stepping with one foot on the crescent moon. In the two other prints (figures 2.8. and 2.9.), the Madonna floats in the air, standing on the crescent moon. She almost seems to appear to the viewer of the print as she is enveloped by strands of mist. As described in the first chapter, the Madonna standing on a crescent moon is often associated with the Immaculate Conception, which is also said to have happened in the Holy House. A connection that would have been encouraged by officials in Loreto, as described in the first chapter. This iconographic type, of the Madonna standing on a crescent moon, is most likely taken from the apocalyptic woman described in Revelation 12:1: “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” The description of the woman in this sentence directly corresponds to the depiction of the Madonna in all three prints. The reclining dragon under her feet symbolizes the crushed Satan, after Genesis 3:15: “She shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.”<sup>148</sup> So the Madonna in these three prints is triumphant over the devil and the original sin.

#### 2.4.3. Text of the Litany of Loreto

A second striking aspect is that in only two of the six prints, the complete text of the Litany of Loreto is written out (figures 2.4. and 2.6.). If the two texts of the litany are compared, line by line, it is noticeable that they differ on just one line. In the third print (figure 2.6.), the title *Sancta Virgo Virg.* (short for *Virginum*) is included, between the lines *Sancta Dei genitrix* and *Mater Christi*. This line is missing in the first print (figure 2.4.). In both prints, the Litany of Loreto is followed by the *Versiculus*. The text of this is the same in both engravings, as is the text of the *Oremus*, which is printed below the central image in exactly the same way. The way the texts are placed in columns does differ from each other. In the first print, the columns are separated by lines that are printed. In the bottom column, which contains *Oremus* and two prayers the two columns of prayers are separated by a vertical line. All these lines are missing in the third print. The fonts in

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<sup>148</sup> Walter S. Melion, “Virgin of the Immaculate Conception with Symbols from the Lauretan Litany,” in *Through a Glass, Darkly: Allegory & Faith in Netherlandish Prints from Lucas van Leyden to Rembrandt*, ed. Walter S. Melion and James Clifton (Atlanta: The Michael C. Carlos Museum, 2023). Available online via <https://manifold.ecds.emory.edu/read/through-a-glass-darkly/section/48c25a18-b114-43a3-b20c-8f5bee24c830#fig-73>.

both prints are similar, yet slightly different in that the typeface in the third print looks slightly more refined. But it could be that Hieronymus took the first print as an example for the layout of the third print.

#### 2.4.4. *Symbols of the Litany of Loreto*

In four of the six prints (figure 2.5., 2.7., 2.8. and 2.9.), instead of the text of the Litany of Loreto, symbols refer to titles given to the Madonna. Remarkably, when comparing these symbols with the text of the Litany of Loreto as presented in the first and third editions, relatively few similarities can be seen between the lines of text and the symbols. How can this be explained? The titles assigned to these prints by the Hollstein catalogue and various museums seem to strongly suggest a connection with the Litany of Loreto. This association seems especially appropriate in the case of the second print, which prominently shows an image of the legend of the Holy House in the centre.

The way in which the Madonna is depicted, especially in the last three prints, where her image as Madonna of the Immaculate Conception is combined with symbols, is iconographically complex and has a similarly intriguing background. Because of the scope and research question of this thesis, not all the symbols in the prints will be explained in this section but an attempt will be made to outline the historical background of this imagery and devotional meaning. This way of visualising the Madonna, as the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception surrounded by symbols, is an iconography that probably dates back to at least the early sixteenth century in France. The symbols are derived from several Marian litanies. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there existed other Marian litanies than the Litany of Loreto. For example, the seventeenth-century Antwerp Jesuit manual, cited in the first chapter, also includes a litany based on the *heylighe Schrifture* (the Holy Scripture).<sup>149</sup> Many of the titles attributed to the Madonna in the Marian litanies were derived from the Old Testament, a text interpreted as a foreshadowing of events in the New Testament. This is reflected in the Wierix prints. See for example the Latin inscription under the sixth Wierix print, derived from the book Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon) 6:10. The *electa ut sol* (clear as the sun) and *pulchra ut luna* (fair as the moon) are consequently present in all four Wierix prints, where above the Madonna the sun and the moon can be seen. The *speculum sine macula* (spotless mirror) is another example, derived from the book Wisdom of Salomon 7:26, one of the biblical Apocrypha books: “For she is the brightness of the

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<sup>149</sup> Pretere, *Handboexken der sodaliteyt oft broederschap vande H. Maeghet Maria inghestelt inde Soci. Jesu*, 200-203.

everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness.”<sup>150</sup> This is one of the most direct attributes of the Madonna’s Immaculate Conception, and part of the Marian litany based on the Scripture. This symbol appears in all four Wierix prints, which supports the argument that these prints point to the Madonna’s immaculate conception.

It seems that, especially in the case of the last three Wierix prints, the titles in the Hollstein catalogue and museum collections do not accurately reflect the subject matter of these engravings. Instead, these works seem to depict the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception accompanied by symbols from various Marian litanies, rather than exclusively from the Litany of Loreto. The connection with the Loreto cult is therefore by no means strong in the last three prints.

#### *2.4.5. Production of prints*

No notable elements seem to emerge in the production process of the prints, these actually fall very much in line with what is known about the working process of the Wierix family as described earlier in this chapter. Thus, it is fitting that five of the six prints can be attributed to Hieronymus Wierix, as he also has the most small-scale devotional prints to his name within the entire Wierix family oeuvre, as named earlier in this chapter. Two prints, the third and sixth prints (figures 2.6 and 2.9), were granted privilege by Buschere. The fourth print (figure 2.7) was designed by Maarten de Vos, and the sixth print by Joannes Stradanus (figure 2.8). The fourth print has been published by Johannes Baptista Vrints, and the fifth print by Philips Galle (figure 2.8). As such, these are not striking names that seem to deviate from the work process of the Wierix family.

#### *2.4.6. Provenance*

A total of seventy-one impressions of all six prints are known, spread across twenty collections in seventeen European cities and one American city. The collections housing these prints are located in nine European countries and one in the United States, demonstrating the global presence of the prints. The next chapter will discuss the distribution of prints in more detail.

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<sup>150</sup> Suzanne L. Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 39-43.

## 2.5. The Litany of Loreto within the Wierix oeuvre

Now that the prints depicting the Litany of Loreto by Hieronymus and Antonius II have studied and analysed, it is important to place them in this context of their entire oeuvre. Is this a major theme in their oeuvre? Did they also print other prayers? Or other miracle-working Madonnas? And are the Jesuits important commissioners for other prints?

Earlier in this chapter, it has been established that religious prints comprise the majority of the Wierix family's entire oeuvre. In the Hollstein catalogue, which provides the most recent complete overview of the family's entire oeuvre, the prints are divided into several subtopics, including one featuring prints of the Virgin Mary.<sup>151</sup> Most of these prints consist of images depicting scenes from the life of the Madonna, the Holy Family or the Madonna with the Christ Child, sometimes with the mother of the Virgin Anna added, or the Mater Dolorosa with a line of text at the bottom of the image. While studying this material two aspects stand out: the number of prints dedicated to the Madonna of Loreto and the Litany of Loreto compared to the depiction of other miraculous Madonnas, and the number of prints which appear to be connected to the Jesuit Order.

Besides the seven prints discussed above, there are two more Wierix engravings known related to the Loreto cult. The earliest print of the two, which can be dated to 1603 thanks to the inscription of this year on the print, was engraved by the eldest Wierix brother, Johannes.<sup>152</sup> This engraving shows Our Lady of Loreto in a shrine with twisted columns. She and the Christ Child are illuminated by two chandeliers and candles held by angels. The Madonna and Christ Child are enveloped by a richly decorated cloth with two chains draped over it. At the bottom of the image, in the centre is the coat of arms of pope Clement VIII. To the left of this coat of arms, the print is signed and dated IOHA W.F. ET. EX. ANNO 1603. To the right: CVM. G. ET. P. SIG. THE BVSSCHER. The field below reads: IMAGO B. MARIAE VIRGINI LAVRETANAE, which confirms that it is an image of the Madonna of Loreto. This image is various ways similar to the third print, engraved by Hieronymus (figure 2.6.). It could be that Hieronymus took inspiration from a print his older brother Johannes made in 1603. The second print with a depiction of the sculpture of the Madonna of Loreto is the exact image of the image in the middle of the third print described in section 2.3., including the coat of arms of pope Leo XI, which also dates this print to c. 1605.<sup>153</sup> Here, however, the image is not surrounded by

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<sup>151</sup> See for the "Virgin Mary" section of the Hollstein catalogue Van Ruyven-Zeman, "The Wierix Family: Part IV," 111-238 and Van Ruyven-Zeman, "The Wierix Family: Part V," 5-170.

<sup>152</sup> Unfortunately, it was not possible to locate an image of this print beyond the one in the Hollstein catalogue.

<sup>153</sup> Unfortunately, it was for this print also not possible to locate an image beyond the one in the Hollstein catalogue.

prayers but only has a short line of text at the bottom: *Mediatrice nostra, quae es post Deum Spes sola, tuo filio nos repraesenta. Ex processional ecclesiae.*<sup>154</sup> So we could therefore state that within the Wierix brothers' oeuvre, with these two prints added, there are four prints known to depict either the Madonna of Loreto or the legend of the Holy House of Loreto.

Two other engravings of miraculous Madonnas are known in the Wierix family's oeuvre: one of Our Lady of Scherpenheuvel and one of Our Lady of Halle, both by Johannes Wierix.<sup>155</sup> Of course, it cannot be assumed that all the prints ever made by the Wierix family are known today. Many prints may have been lost over time for a variety of reasons. But it is notable that of all the prints that have survived, a certain number depict the Madonna of Loreto, the Holy House of Loreto and the Litany of Loreto.

While looking at other religious prints of the Wierix family, the presence of the Jesuit order cannot be omitted. For example, there are several engravings, signed by Hieronymus Wierix, depicting the Madonna and Child with members of the Jesuit order.<sup>156</sup> There are also many surviving engravings of the *Salus Populi Romani Madonna* by the Wierix family. For the Jesuits, this is an important work of art in their devotion. The original, an Italo-Byzantine icon reputed to have been painted by St Luke, is in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.<sup>157</sup> The Wierix family executed prints for other religious orders, such as the Carmelites, but the number of these prints contrasts sharply with the Wierix prints associated with the Jesuit order.

## 2.6. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to investigate the different prints that were created around the Litany of Loreto by the Wierix family and to establish their place within the family's oeuvre. The Antwerp in which the Wierix family was active fell into the hands of the Spanish Habsburgs after a turbulent period at the end of the sixteenth century, resulting in Catholicism constituting the dominant religion. The influence of this political and religious shift is evident in the Wierix brothers' oeuvre, and the discussed prints. Whereas prior to 1585 the Wierix brothers were still registered Lutherans, they, especially Hieronymus, produced mainly religious Catholic prints after the Fall of Antwerp. These prints constitute the largest genre within their entire oeuvre.

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<sup>154</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, "The Wierix Family: Part V," 101.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 102-103.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 112, 113, 125.

<sup>157</sup> Mia Mochizuki, *Jesuit Art* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 12.

The six prints depicting the Litany of Loreto show a great variety. In two of the prints, the association with the Loreto cult is evident through the depiction of the legend of the Holy House and the Madonna of Loreto. However, in the other four prints, this connection is less clear. Particularly in the last three prints, the primary subject seems to be the Immaculate Conception of the Madonna, with the titles of the Holy Virgin, drawn from various textual sources including the Litany of Loreto, depicted as symbols to emphasize her purity and protective power. Furthermore, the presence of the Jesuit order in the oeuvre of the Wierix family is notably large compared to the work they produced for other religious orders. Did the Jesuits influence the iconography of the six prints depicting the Litany of Loreto? This is quite plausible, as they are believed to have been the commissioners for at least two of the six prints, based on the copperplates that are in their possession. Subsequently, was the Jesuit order involved in the distribution and use of these prints? The next chapter will investigate these questions.

### 3. Distribution, functionality, and the international context of the prints of the Litany of Loreto

#### 3.1. Introduction

A nineteenth-century Catholic church in Apeldoorn, a town in the Dutch province of Gelderland, houses an altar dedicated to Mary (figure 3.1.). This altar, still in use today, features an embroidered cloth bearing the Ave Maria (in Dutch: *Wees Gegroet Maria*). The altarpiece, which stands atop the altar, is made of wood and divided into three sections, showcasing various

sculptures. The central panel of the altarpiece portrays an enthroned Madonna with the Christ Child on her lap, with a rosary draped around him. Flanking them on either side, the two wings of the altarpiece depict four titles from the Litany of Loreto: Tower of Ivory (*Turris Eburnea*), House of Gold (*Domus Aurea*), Ark of the Covenant (*Foederis Arca*), and Gate of Heaven (*Ianua Coeli*). The enduring use of the Litany of Loreto over many centuries is evident here, possibly influenced by the widespread distribution of prints by the Wierix brothers, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Building on the background of the Litany of Loreto and the Wierix family's prints established in previous chapters, this chapter will further explore their distribution,



Figure 3.1. Artist unknown, Marian altar. Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, Apeldoorn.

intended function, and compare them with other prints of the Litany of Loreto from the Low Countries and beyond. The chapter is organized into four sections: the first examines the distribution of the Wierix prints, the second explores their function, and the final two sections focus on other prints featuring the Litany of Loreto within the Low Countries and beyond.

### 3.2. Distribution

Unlike, for example, painted altarpieces commissioned for specific chapels, early modern prints were not tied to a specific place. This placelessness makes these prints well suited for distribution and for the individualisation and privatisation of religious experience. The essential characteristics of the early modern print, (1) multiplicity, (2) portability and (3) relatively low cost, ensured that the prints crossed geographical and even chronological boundaries.<sup>158</sup>

This section therefore tries to uncover how the prints of the Litany of Loreto spread beyond Antwerp. As established in the previous chapter, the prints can be found today in various collections in Europe and America. The difficult aspect is the lack of concrete evidence on the distribution of the discussed Wierix prints of the Litany of Loreto. In order to acquire this evidence extensive archival research is necessary. Because of the scope of this thesis, this was not possible. Therefore, the most plausible ways the prints of the Litany of Loreto were distributed from Antwerp are discussed below.

#### 3.2.1. Antwerp: international printing centre for devotional Jesuit prints

As described in the second chapter, it is most likely that the six Litany of Loreto prints were engraved and published in Antwerp since Hieronymus and Antonius II are not known to have worked in any other city. Antwerp was an international centre for the production of devotional prints in the late sixteenth and especially in the seventeenth century, thanks in part to the Jesuit order. Devotional literature and prints served as an important tool for the Jesuit mission to strengthen and spread the Catholic faith during the Counter-Reformation.<sup>159</sup> The Jesuits knew roughly two types of loose-sheet devotional prints. The *suffragia* and the *sanctjes*. The *suffragia* were small prints with a monthly saint on them. These were distributed among members of the order every month. Members were expected to be inspired by the good deeds of the saint in question. This became a standard custom throughout the Jesuit order. *Sanctjes* were devotional prints that were distributed to other Catholics and children who attended Sunday school, for example. The prints of the Litany of Loreto seem to fall into this category. The Jesuits' intensive use of devotional prints provided Antwerp engravers with a lot of work. Alfons Thijs writes that from 1586 to 1650 40 % of all Antwerp engravers, who were members of the St Lucas guild, produced

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<sup>158</sup> Lisa Pon, "Place, Print and Miracle: Forlì's *Madonna of the Fire* as functional site," *Art History* 31, no. 3 (2008): 303.

<sup>159</sup> Dirk Imhof, "Successful Strategies for Creating a Devotional Best Seller: Canisius's *Manuale Catholicorum* Published by the Plantin Press," in *Books and Prints at the Heart of the Catholic Reformation in the Low Countries (16th–17th Centuries)*, ed. Renaud Adam, Rosa De Marco, and Malcolm Walsby (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 46.



religious prints. The prints were sold but also distributed free of charge on the feast days of saints.<sup>160</sup> The Jesuit order within Antwerp was growing rapidly, forming a large market within Antwerp. To illustrate: Alfons Thijs calculated, based on the number of members of Antwerp's Mary sodalities, Jesuit confraternities dedicated to Mary, that in 1614 there must have been about a turnover of 18.000 *suffragia* in one year.<sup>161</sup> But devotional prints did not only sell well within Antwerp, they also found their way abroad. This was firstly due to the high quality of the prints made by the Wierix brothers. Secondly, it was common knowledge that since the fall of Antwerp in 1585, discussed in chapter two, the city was very Catholic and so were the prints coming from this city. Trading was done with Germany, Italy and Spain, among others.<sup>162</sup>

Next to this, many of the Wierix engravings were used by Jesuit missionaries around the world and were copied abroad by indigenous artists.<sup>163</sup> For example, Mia Mochizuki argues that representations of the Madonna by Hieronymus Wierix, referring to amongst others the fourth print discussed in chapter 2 (figure 2.7.), may have served as an inspiration for an image of The Madonna of the Snow by the Jesuit Niccolò School workshop in Japan (figure 3.4.). The unbound hair of the Madonna of the Snow, falling over her shoulders, her uncloaked head and the crown of red flowers, that invoke the ring of stars on top of the Madonnas head, are close to Hieronymus's engravings of the Madonna. The artists of the Niccolò school preferred to combine Marian iconographies they extracted from European examples, which explains why they do not depict a standard European iconographic type of the Madonna of the Snow.<sup>164</sup> It is further known that the Jesuits trained indigenous artist with the help of the Wierix family's engravings, such as Guaraní artists in Latin-America.<sup>165</sup> Unfortunately, there is no significant evidence for the presence of any of the six prints of the Litany of Loreto on the missions in Asia and Latin America attributed to the Wierix family, but it is very plausible that they ended up there given that the Loreto cult was so important to the Jesuits and replicas of the Holy House of Loreto are present in Latin America and Asia, as discussed in the first chapter. Alongside this, it would be interesting to consider whether, conversely, the Wierix family might also have been inspired or influenced by the ideas or art brought back by the Jesuits from their missions. As

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<sup>160</sup> Alfons K.L. Thijs, *Van Geuzenstad tot Katholieke Bolwerk: Antwerpen en de Contrareformatie* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), 97-100.

<sup>161</sup> Thijs, *Antwerpen*, 15.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-24.

<sup>163</sup> Begheyn, "The collection of copperplates by members of the Wierix family in the Jesuit church 'De Krijtberg' in Amsterdam," 196.

<sup>164</sup> Mochizuki, *Jesuit Art*, 144.

<sup>165</sup> Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit missions*, 162-163.

Peter Burke writes: “(...) when there is an encounter between two cultures, information usually flows in both directions, even if in unequal amounts.”<sup>166</sup>

### 3.2.2. *Street sellers*

Besides the fact that the prints of the Litany of Loreto were distributed for free by the Jesuits among the members of their congregation and during missions, it is also quite possible that they were sold. It is known, for instance, that Italian traders travelled across Europe to buy prints, including from Antwerp printmakers.<sup>167</sup> Two prints from the mid- and late-seventeenth century show well what was a common way to obtain cheap devotional prints, by buying them on the street (figure 3.2. and figure 3.3.). Both prints depict a male street vendor selling prints. Figure 3.2. shows prominently on the vendor’s chest a large print with an image of the Madonna, with a halo of stars, and the Christ child. In figure 3.3. we see a vendor holding a print of the Madonna and Child with his right arm. Under the image stands the following inscription: *VERO RITART(to) DELLA MADONA*. Rosaries also hang around this arm. At the very bottom of the print there are four lines of text, in two columns, which explains in Italian that a street vendor of rosaries and images of saints is depicted.<sup>168</sup> The selling of printed books and loose-sheet prints by pedlars was common throughout early modern Europe.<sup>169</sup> It is therefore plausible that the Wierix family’s prints may also have been sold this way.

### 3.2.3. *Pilgrimage*

In a painting from the beginning of the seventeenth century, Caravaggio depicted two pilgrims (figure 3.5.). A man and a woman, barefoot, kneel with folded hands before the Madonna and Child. Only a pile of bricks to the left of the Madonna and Child betrays that this is the Madonna of Loreto, with the stones referring to the Holy House of Loreto. Caravaggio thus departed from

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<sup>166</sup> Peter Burke, “Translating Knowledge, Translating Cultures,” in *Kultureller Austausch: Bilanz und Perspektiven der Frühneuzeitforschung*, ed. Michael North (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009), 69-70.

<sup>167</sup> Thijs, *Antwerpen*, 38.

<sup>168</sup> “Vn più uile tra pueri mercanti Ancha tal uolta il ciel non abbandona, Cò rosari e l’imagini de Santi Sopra agn altro mestier porto corona.”

<sup>169</sup> See for example the monograph by Laurence Fontaine, *History of Pedlars in Europe*, trans. Vicki Whittaker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996) and the chapters on pedlars in the Dutch Republic by Jeroen Salman and Karen Bowen and Renaissance Italy by Rosa Salzberg in *Not Dead Things: The Dissemination of Popular Print in England and Wales, Italy, and the Low Countries, 1500-1820*, ed. Roeland Harms, Joad Raymond, and Jeroen Salman (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

the two 'standard' iconographic Loreto types. The presence of the pilgrims makes the painting a fine illustration of how popular Loreto was among pilgrims in the seventeenth century.<sup>170</sup>

At Loreto, encouraged in part by Pope Sixtus V, various forms of printed material were produced that served as souvenirs for the many pilgrims who came to Loreto and as resources for virtual pilgrimage.<sup>171</sup> It would also be a possibility that, in addition to the prints produced in Loreto, the prints from the Litany of Loreto of the Wierix family ended up here. This, amongst others, since the Jesuits took care of the Loreto shrine since 1554. The text on all six Wierix prints is in Latin and the iconography used is recognisable to all Catholics. It is known, for example, that Flemish Jesuits Leonardus Lessius and Jan Berchmans distributed devotional prints of the Wierix brothers to their Jesuit brothers in Rome at the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>172</sup>

#### 3.2.4. Copies

Another way in which the Wierix brothers prints spread in and outside Antwerp, even after their death, was through the copies made of their prints. About 1380 copies of the Wierix prints are known, which is almost two-thirds of the prints engraved or published by the brothers. These copies vary in quality and style and were sometimes also copied in woodcut. Some Wierix prints granted privilege by Buschere or Piermans were nevertheless also copied. These copies are also an indication on how popular the Wierix brothers were.<sup>173</sup>

Of the six prints of the Litany of Loreto a total of 12 copies are known. However, it is important to note here that the prints may have been copied more often but have either not yet been found or have been lost. The print of which the most copies are known is the fifth print (figure 2.8.). It has been copied six times, one engraved by the Flemish Adriaen Collaert, one published by, also Flemish, Theodoor Galle (1571 – 1633), one published by, also Flemish, Gaspar Huberti (active c. 1685 – 1724), one published by Noe van Sande of whom,

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<sup>170</sup> Daniel M. Unger, "Between Nazareth and Loreto: The Role of Stone Bricks in Caravaggio's 'Madonna di Loreto,'" in *Maps and Travel in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period: Knowledge, Imagination, and Visual Culture*, ed. by Ingrid Baumgärtner, Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby and Katrin Kogman-Appel (Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 252, 257-258.

<sup>171</sup> Giffin, "Translatio in stampa," 8.

<sup>172</sup> Thijs, *Antwerpen*, 37.

<sup>173</sup> Zsuzanna van Ruyven-Zeman, "The Wierix Family: introduction and guide to the catalogue," xxxiii.

unfortunately, no biographical information has been found. Of the other two copies no designer, engraver or publisher is known.<sup>174</sup>

The first print (figure 2.4.) has been copied four times, with a copy published by the German engraver and publisher Johan Bussemacher (active c. 1577 - c. 1627) with a German text, the French engraver and publisher Jean Messenger (c. 1572 – 1649), the German engraver and publisher Peter Overadt (active c. 1596 – 1632) and a woodcut engraved by the Dutch Christoffel van Sichem II (c. 1581 – 1658).<sup>175</sup>

The third and sixth print (figures 2.6. and 2.9.) have both been copied one time. The copy of the third print was published by Flemish Michael Snijders.<sup>176</sup> The copy of the sixth print is engraved by Philip Sadeler (1600 – 1650), who was from Flemish descent but was born in Venice and was mostly active there.<sup>177</sup> The second and fourth print (figures 2.5. and 2.7.) have not been copied, as far as known.

This above information makes it clear that, besides the fact that the prints of the Litany of Loreto were copied within Antwerp, they were also known to engravers and publishers in the Dutch Republic, Germany, France and Italy. The fact that these prints were copies suggests that they were in demand in those locations. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the majority of these copies was produced in the first half of the seventeenth century, with the exception of Gaspar Huberti, who was active in the second half of the seventeenth century.

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<sup>174</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, “The Wierix Family: Part IV,” 236.

<sup>175</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, “The Wierix Family: Part V,” 163.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>177</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, “The Wierix Family: Part IV,” 234.



**Figure 3.2.** Simon Guillain, after Annibale Carracci, *Vendi Quadri* from the *Le Arti di Bologna* series, 1646. Etching on paper, 27.4 x 16.6 cm. Object number: 1942,0514.3.20. The British Museum, London.



Figure 3.3. Giuseppe Maria Mitelli, after Annibale Carracci, *The street seller of rosaries and pious prints*, 1660. Etching on paper, 29 x 19.3 cm. Object number: 1850,0713.177. The British Museum, London.



Figure 3.4. Niccolò School, *Madonna of the Snow*, c. 1590 – 1614. Japanese colors on paper, hanging scroll. Twenty-Six Martyrs Museum, Nagasaki. Object number: unknown.



Figure 3.5. Caravaggio, *Madonna di Loreto* or *Madonna dei Pellegrini*, 1605. Basilica of Sant'Agostino, Rome. Object number: unknown.



### 3.3. The function of devotional prints in religious devotion

Now that the above piece has described how the Wierix prints were distributed the question arises of how the prints were handled once people had them in their possession? What devotional function did these prints serve? This section examines the broader role of religious prints in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, discusses how prints served as tools for private devotion, and tries to identify the devotional function served by the prints of the Litany of Loreto. Unfortunately, as far as is known, no testimonies have survived of how, where and by whom exactly the prints of the Litany of Loreto were used. But based on findings on other devotional prints and other primary sources, the most possible options are discussed below.

Devotional prints served and supported the same kind of function as paintings, sculptures and stained-glass windows of saints in that believers could relate to a particular 'standard' image of a saint. By using the same iconographic elements for a particular saint, or in the case of the Litany of Loreto a prayer, they were recognizable to Catholics around the world and could thus encourage believers, through text and image, to follow a Christian life path.<sup>178</sup> As David Morgan has written: "That pictures of Mary or Jesus (or Elvis for that matter) look right, as if they fit templates, suggests that they feel authentic, filling the expectations that devout viewers bring to them."<sup>179</sup> The devotional prints reminded the devout that the saint could be called upon for favours and to ward off mischief. In 1648, for instance, a Jesuit priest insisted on hanging a picture of the Madonna in all rooms in the house and also in a shop if one owned one. In addition to encouraging devotion in this way, the prints also provided an explicit testimony to the catholicity of the resident or owner of the shop. During private praying, also known as meditation, the prints assisted in establishing and nourishing the imagination.<sup>180</sup>

Unfortunately, not much is yet known about the use of devotional prints inside the home in the Southern Netherlands, but Sarah Moran has painted an interesting picture of the use of religious artworks in the Antwerp Beguinage in the seventeenth century. This was a residential female community where women followed a semi-monastic lifestyle. These show similarities with what has been described so far in this thesis. For instance, Moran writes that of the books the Beguines owned, many were by Jesuit authors. They also had in their possession a book of prints by 'Wierix'. This was probably a volume made from prints they had gathered together themselves. Furthermore, next to Christ, Mary was one of the figures most commonly found in

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<sup>178</sup> Thijs, *Van Geuzenstad tot Katholiek Bolwerk*, 100-101.

<sup>179</sup> David Morgan, *The Embodied Eye: Religious Visual Culture and the Social Life of Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 190.

<sup>180</sup> Thijs, *Van Geuzenstad tot Katholiek Bolwerk*, 100-101.

the art objects they owned. Interestingly, many of these images of the Madonna were copies of miraculous Madonnas known to them through local prints, such as those of the *Salus populi Romani* in Rome by the Wierix brothers.<sup>181</sup> Based on this information, it could be plausible that they might also have had a print of the Litany of Loreto by the Wierix brothers in their possession.

Another interesting example of the use of devotional prints inside is provided by the discovery of early Renaissance woodcuts in a fifteenth century house that was demolished in the Italian town of Bassano in 1884. These prints were attached on or above a door. These were about ten devotional prints whose religious subject matter varied widely, including a depiction of the Madonna and Child (see figure 3.6. for one of these prints). The inhabitants of the house probably walked past this collection of prints every day, perhaps using them as prompts for prayer and feeling protected by the presence of these prints. Katherine Tycz links these prints to the miraculous Madonna of the Fire in Forlì (figure 3.7.). This is a woodcut that miraculously survived a fire in a house in 1428. Since then, that print itself became the object of widespread devotion and pilgrimage. Perhaps this story inspired devotees to decorate their walls with such images.<sup>182</sup> It is noteworthy that believers likely did not possess a print of a specific miraculous Madonna but instead usually owned several devotional prints, often depicting various religious subjects.

A small, thin publication titled *Het GHEBRUYCK ende PROFYT der SVFFRAGIEN*, published in 1685 in Antwerp, informs the reader about the origins, the correct use and the benefit of the *suffragien*, the prints with a patron saint distributed every month by the Jesuits. This custom within the religious order has already been briefly addressed above. The publication is of a later date than the prints of the Litany of Loreto and the Wierix prints were probably not intended as a *suffragie*, but it is still a good source as it illustrates the importance of prints to the Jesuits and illuminates how these prints were used.

“Het en is dan niet ghenoech het *suffragium* alle Maenden te ontfanghen, ende daer naer

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<sup>181</sup> Sarah Moran, “Bringing the Counter-Reformation home: the domestic use of artworks at the Antwerp Beguinage in the seventeenth century,” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 38, no. 3 (2015-2016), 144, 151, 152.

<sup>182</sup> Katherine Tycz, “The Virgin enthroned suckling the infant Christ, surrounded by angels, woodcut, c. 1450,” in *Madonnas & Miracles: The Holy Home in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Maya Corry, Deborah Howard and Mary Laven (London, New York: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2017), 118.

t'huys te leggen in de kiste oft in eenen boeck, maer men moet dat dickwils insiende den *Heylighen* eeren; de *deught* te wercke stellen; ende bidden voor die *saecke* ende voor den *Persoon* daer men toe vermaent wordt.”<sup>183</sup>

This translates to: “It is not enough to receive the suffragium every month, and after that to put it at home in a chest or in a book, but one must honor the saint often; putting the virtue to work; and praying for the matters and for the Person to whom one is exhorted.”

The above quote reminds the reader that it is not enough to receive the print and store it at home. Thus, the reader is actively encouraged to pray with the print in sight. So, this piece of text confirms that devotional prints were stored in chests or between a book inside the home. The following quote from this booklet is also interesting regarding the use of litanies in private devotion:

“Daer zijnder die eene Litanie maecken van alle hunne *Heylighe Patroonen*, die sy dickwils lesen oft hoorden lesen, namentlijck in de ure des doodts, op dat sy scheidende uyt dese werelt, door t gheselschap ende de bescherminghe van dese *Heylighen*, te beter soudende gheraecken tot de plaetse van hunne saligheyt.”<sup>184</sup>

This translates to: “There are those who make a litany of all their holy patrons, which they read or are read to them, namely at the hour of death, so that they may depart from this world, with the company and protection of these saints, and arrive at the place of their salvation.”

It is described here that some people write their own litany with the patron saints in it. These they read themselves or are read to them when they pass away and are supposed to protect them and keep them company as they make their way to heaven. This shows that a litany, which may include the Litany of Loreto, is a very personal invocation of a saint. The title of the book further

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<sup>183</sup> Author unknown, *Het ghebryck ende profyt der suffragien, die door eene loffelijcke ghewoonte in vele vergaderinghen ende familien, alle maenden worden uyt-ghedeylt* (Antwerpen: Jacobus Woons, 1685), 7-8.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

mentions that this use of *suffragia* has been adopted by families as well, so is not only applied in this way within Jesuit confraternities.<sup>185</sup>

Based on the above information, it is most likely that the small Wierix prints of the Litany of Loreto were mainly intended for private devotion. There are exceptions of devotional prints that themselves eventually became miraculous and around which a cult is formed, such as the German Madonna of Kevelaer.<sup>186</sup> Prints are also known to serve as a contact relic, including a copy after a Wierix print with a depiction of the martyrdom of St Ignatius of Antioch. The inscription on this copy states that the sheet had been in physical contact with the saint's remains. This had given the sheet the same miraculous powers as the St Ignatius remains.<sup>187</sup> But a miraculous or contact relic status cannot be assigned to the six Wierix prints.

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<sup>185</sup> The complete title of the publication is: *Het ghebryck ende profyt der suffragien, die door eene loffelijcke ghewoonte in vele vergaderinghen ende familien, alle maenden worden nyt-ghedeylt.* This translates to: The use and profit of *suffragien*, which by a praiseworthy custom is distributed among many assemblies and families, each month.

<sup>186</sup> "The Origins of the Pilgrimage," Wallfahrt Kevelaer, accessed Augustus 5, 2024, <https://www.wallfahrt-kevelaer.de/entstehung-der-wallfahrt/>.

<sup>187</sup> Van Ruyven-Zeman, "The Wierix Family: introduction and guide to the catalogue," xxix.



**Figure 3.6.** Anonymous artist, *Virgin enthroned suckling the infant Christ*, c. 1440-1480. Woodcut with stencil colouring, 53.6 x 41.2 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1895,0122.1187.



**Figure 3.7.** Anonymous artist, *Madonna del Fuoco of Forlì*, fifteenth century. Woodcut with hand-stencilled colour, 55 x 40 cm. Santa Croce, Forlì. Object number: unknown.

### 3.4. Other prints of the Litany of Loreto from the Low Countries

This section seeks to explore the following questions: besides the Wierix family, were there other printers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century producing images of the Litany of Loreto in the Low Countries? How do these relate to the prints of the Wierix family?

#### 3.4.1. A print with the text of the Marian litanies

An interesting print is one by Raphael Sadeler I (c. 1560/1561 – 1628/1632) (figure 3.8). It should be noted here that Raphael Sadeler was born in Antwerp in the sixteenth century, but spent a large part of his working life in Munich and Venice. However, his work is considered part of the Flemish school, and the engravings attributed to him and his family are included in the Hollstein catalogues, which focus on Northern and Southern Netherlandish prints. That is why this print has been included in this ‘Low Countries section’, and not in the next section that will discuss related prints outside of the Low Countries.<sup>188</sup>

In the middle of the print, the crowned Virgin of Loreto and Christ child can be seen. Christ has his hand raised in blessing. This depiction of the Madonna and Child is flanked by two plants on either side, a sun and moon, and a star in the top corner, five symbols of the Madonna.<sup>189</sup> The central image is surrounded by sixteen more Marian symbols.<sup>190</sup> Many of these symbols are derived from the two litanies featured on the print.<sup>191</sup> The Litany of Loreto is printed on the left side, while the Litany of the Blessed Virgin appears on the right side. The title on the print translates to English as: “Litanies which are chanted on each feast day of the Blessed Virgin

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<sup>188</sup> For biographical information on Raphael Sadeler and his family see, amongst others, the (general) information gathered by the RKD via <https://rkd.nl/artists/69220> and Karen L. Bowen, “The Sadeler: From Printmakers to Booksellers,” *Print Quarterly* XXXIX, no. 4 (2022).

<sup>189</sup> The symbols are: Bright as the Sun (*Electa ut Sol*), Star of the Sea (*Stella Maris*), Lily of the valley (*Lilium con ualium*), Beautiful as the Moon (*Pulchra ut Luna*), Flower of the field (*Flos Campi*).

<sup>190</sup> These symbols are: Like a Plane Tree (*Quasi Plantanus*), Ladder of Heaven (*Scala Coeli*), Mirror Without Stain (*Speculum Sine Macula*), Gate of Heaven (*Porta Coeli*), Like a Cedar (*Quasi Cedrus*), Like a Cypress (*Quasi Cypressus*), Like an Olive Tree (*Quasi Olina*), Well of Waters (*Puteus Aquarum*), Closed Gate (*Porta Clausa*), City of God (*Civitas Dei*), Temple of God (*Templum Dei*), Enclosed Garden (*Hortus Conclusus*), Tower of David (*Turris David*), Sealed Fountain (*Fons Signatus*), Like a Palm Tree (*Quasi Palma*), Like a Rose Garden (*Quasi plantation Rose*).

<sup>191</sup> From the Litany of Loreto the symbol of the Tower of David (*Turris David*)

From the Litany of the Blessed Virgin the following symbols are derived: Bright as the Sun (*Electa ut Sol*), Beautiful as the Moon (*Pulchra ut Luna*), Mirror Without Stain (*Speculum Sine Macula*), Gate of Heaven (*Porta Coeli*), Well of Waters (*Puteus Aquarum*), Enclosed Garden (*Hortus Conclusus*) and Sealed Fountain (*Fons Signatus*).

and on Saturdays in the holy Loreto Church.<sup>192</sup> This title informs the viewer that both litanies were utilized in the church at Loreto, something not previously confirmed by the other sources cited in this thesis. As described in the first chapter, the Wierix prints depict symbols based on titles of the Madonna from both the Litany of Loreto and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin (based on the Holy Scripture). But unlike this print by Sadeler, no print with the written-out text of this second litany by the Wierix brothers is known. Perhaps it was once made but lost. This print is therefore interesting because it confirms that the text of this second litany was thus really known to engravers and also used at Loreto. But there are also symbols of trees and flowers around the Madonna that do not appear in either of the litanies. Could these then possibly originate from yet other Marian prayers?



Figure 3.8. Raphael Sadeler I, *Maria Lavretana*, 1575-1632. Engraving and letterpress on paper, 16.3 x 35.9 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1937,0915.159.

<sup>192</sup> "LITANIAE QVAE SINGVLIS DIEBVS FESTIS B.V. ET SABBATI IN SACRA LAVRETANA AEDE DECANTANTVR."



### 3.4.2. Prints with the symbols of the Marian litanies

As the print above shows, the Wierix brothers were not the only Flemish printmakers in their time to produce prints portraying the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception surrounded by symbols from the Marian litanies. See, for example, another print by Raphael Sadeler I (figure 3.9.). This print can be dated at 1605 due to the inscription on the bottom of the print and was published in München (*Monachij*). In this print, as in the Wierix prints, we see the Madonna depicted with loose hair and a crown of stars. She wears a loose robe and stands on a crescent moon. She hovers above a snake, the representation of Satan. Surrounding the Madonna, surrounded by clouds, and below her are various symbols of the Marian litany. Above the Madonna and the Holy Spirit, the text can be read that goes back to the Song of Solomon.<sup>193</sup> Below the image are four lines of text divided into two columns.<sup>194</sup>

A copy after the just described print, dated at the beginning of the seventeenth century by the Rijksmuseum, shows the Madonna on the crescent moon with her head bent in the opposite direction (figure 3.10.). The thin lines and elegant manner in which the image is engraved resembles the Wierix family's style more than that of Sadeler, but the composition of the print is certainly very close to Sadeler's engraving. Above the Madonna, the Holy Spirit is missing, the same text from the Old Testament can be read. Under the image are four lines of text divided into two columns, only the text is different.<sup>195</sup>

A third print, engraved by Michiel Snyders after Johannes Stradanus, is also considered a copy, after the Wierix's prints (figure 3.11.). When this print is compared with the fifth and sixth prints by Hieronymus Wierix, the resemblances are clear. For instance, the symbols from the Marian litanies on either side of the Madonna are almost the same as in the fifth Wierix print, but mirrored. The text under the image is the same as on the sixth Wierix print. Lastly, a print attributed to Cornelis Galle I (1576 – 1650) (figure 3.12.), an Antwerp engraver active in the same period as the Wierix brothers, is also a depiction of the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception but here the Madonna is standing on a globe instead of the crescent moon. Around the Virgin, putti hold symbols from the Marian litanies and below the Madonna, in a landscape, more symbols can be seen.

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<sup>193</sup> *Tota pulchra es amica mae, et macula non est in te* (Song of Solomon 4:7).

<sup>194</sup> *Artifices voluere manus deducere vultum I Virgo tuum: frustra sed voluere manus. I Nec doluit pictor; nam si deducare possit, I Vultus splendorem cernere nemo queat.*

<sup>195</sup> *Concipitur sine labe deum genitura coronant I Et bisseña caput sijdera, luna pedes. I Accurrit superum coetus viteq parenti I Non Eua at verso nomine dicit Aue.*

These prints thus show great similarities to the fourth, fifth and sixth Wierix prints in their depiction of the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception in combination with symbols from the Marian litanies. However, it is notable that the Wierix family's various prints with this subject in their oeuvre seem to be larger than those by other Antwerp printmakers. Also, the number of impressions that have survived from these prints seems to be more than from the four prints described above. However, it should be mentioned here that the oeuvre of the Wierix family is particularly well and fairly recently documented in detail in the Hollstein catalogues. More extensive research is needed on prints of this iconographic type by other Antwerp printmakers to say with certainty that the Wierix family's share of this iconographic type was in fact greater.



**Figure 3.9.** Rapael Sadeler I, *Allergy of the Immaculate Conception*, 1605. Engraving on paper, 26 x 17.1 cm. La Salle University Art Museum, Philadelphia. Object number: 76-G-656.



**Figure 3.10.** Anonymous, after Rapael Sadeler I, *Mary on the crescent moon in mandorla with the symbols of the Marian litany around her*, 1605-1632. Engraving on paper, 13.8 x 9.4 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Object number: RP-P-OB-7655.



**Figure 3.11.** Michiel Snyders, after Jan van der Straet (Johannes Stradanus), *The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception*, after c. 1611. Engraving on paper, 20.8 x 15.6 cm. The British Museum, London. Object number: 1868,0612.393.



**Figure 3.12.** Cornelis Galle I, after Bernardo Castello, *The Virgin in Glory, standing on clouds surrounded by angels holding the symbols of the Immaculate Conception*, 1595-1633. Engraving on paper, 36.9 x 27.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Object number: 53.601.15(71).

### 3.5. Depictions outside of the Low Countries

This section seeks to explore if outside the Low Countries, any prints of the Litany of Loreto are known? How do these compare with those of the Wierix family? And did these prints appear before or after the Wierix prints?

#### 3.5.1. Italy

An interesting example of prints depicting the Litany of Loreto is provided by two maps from the early seventeenth century, attributed to Giacomo Lauro (active c. 1583-1630) (figures 3.13. and 3.14.). He produced several cartographic and topographic prints of the Loreto shrine. These prints are encyclopedic in nature as they seek to capture all information about the Loreto shrine. The two maps inserted in this thesis both contain the Litany of Loreto. The litany is thus clearly linked to the Loreto cult here.

The earliest of the two prints can be dated 1606 due to the inscription on the bottom right of the print. But another, faded, inscription reveals the year 1585 (figure 3.13.). Giacomo Lauro was known for redrafting his own copper plates and regularly reshaping his compositions.<sup>196</sup> The title of this print translates as: “Description of the Translation of the Holy House of the Most Blessed Virgin from Nazareth to Dalmatia and Thence to Loreto”.<sup>197</sup> At the center of the print, the Madonna of Loreto is depicted, with the Christ child on her arm. Next to this, the Madonna and Child are also depicted on the flying Holy House and the various stops the Holy House made before ‘landing’ at the place where the shrine of Loreto is located. On the roads depicted on the map, many pilgrims are walking. The bottom left of the print shows the Litany of Loreto in a square bordered with a cartouche. To the left and right of the litany, two groups of praying pilgrims are depicted. Near these pilgrims is the letter ‘N’ referring to the legenda at the bottom right of the print. Here, an explanation is given, which unfortunately cannot be read due to the poor quality of photo of this print. It is unfortunately also not possible to read every title in the litany. But it is clear that at the top of the litany the same text is written as on the third described Wierix print in the second chapter.<sup>198</sup> Could Giacomo Lauro and Hieronymus Wierix possibly have seen each other’s prints? Or was this a piece of text that was more often put above the Litany of Loreto? It is known that these prints by Giacomo Lauro were

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<sup>196</sup> Giffin, “*Translatio* in stampa,” 7.

<sup>197</sup> “*Descriptio Translationis Sanctae Domus Beatissimae Virginis e Nazareth in Dalmatiam et Inde Lauretum.*”

<sup>198</sup> “*LITANIAE QVAE SINGVLIS DIEBUS SABBATHI ET FESTIS B. (M AE) MARIAE CANVTVR IN S. (MA) AEDE LAVRETANA.*”

intended for pilgrims, to take home as souvenirs. In addition, these prints could also serve as a means of visual pilgrimage, for people who were unable to make the actual pilgrimage to Loreto due to various circumstances.<sup>199</sup>

The second print (figure 3.14.) depicts the region encompassing Ancona, Recanati, Loreto, and the Basilica of the Holy House, along with the pilgrim routes leading to Loreto. The engraving's title translates to "Holy House, City and Area of Loreto, the Miracles on the Journey from Nazareth to the Picene District of Italy [Le Marche]".<sup>200</sup> At the top, there is an allegorical image of the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child. On the right, large cartouches display illustrations at the top and an inset map of the western Mediterranean at the bottom, outlining the route from Nazareth to Tersatto (Trsat, Croatia) and to Recanati. Between these cartouches is the coat of arms of the Duchy of Urbino and a dedication to the *condottiere* Federico da Montefeltro (1422-1482), who visited Loreto as a pilgrim in 1475.<sup>201</sup> One of the things depicted in the cartouches on the right is the Litany of Loreto, with the Madonna of Loreto depicted above it showing very similarities to the Madonna of Loreto in the third described print by Hieronymus Wierix. In the same way, this Madonna also stands on a platform, in a decorated robe with two chains draped over it. The Madonna and Child are illuminated by two chandeliers and two angels holding candles. They are flanked by twisted columns. Unfortunately, due to the quality of the photograph, it is not possible to properly read the lines of the litany depicted below.

Giacomo Lauro worked mainly in Rome. Perhaps this is where he came across the Wierix print of the Litany of Loreto? As described earlier in this chapter, Jesuit friars took prints from Antwerp to Rome and elsewhere to distribute. Given the date of the second print, it seems most likely that Giacomo Lauro took the Wierix print as an example, and not the other way around.

### 3.5.2. Austria

In 1636, the Jesuit Peter Stoergler (c. 1595-1642) published the first Litany of Loreto illustrated with emblematic compositions: the *Asma Poeticum Litaniarum Lauretanarum*.<sup>202</sup> This Litany of Loreto contains fifty-six invocations, each illustrated by a print. According to Carme López Calderón, these prints and their meanings go far beyond merely depicting the title, they also

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<sup>199</sup> Giffin, "Translatio in stampa," 7.

<sup>200</sup> "Alma Domus, Urbs, Agerq[ue] Laureti, Miracula, ac iter e Nazareth in Italiam Picenumq[ue]".

<sup>201</sup> "Alma Domus, Urbs, Agerq[ue] Laureti, Miracula, ac iter e Nazareth in Italiam Picenumq[ue]," Internet Archive, accessed August 7, 2024, [https://archive.org/details/wotb\\_9210557/page/n1/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/wotb_9210557/page/n1/mode/2up).

<sup>202</sup> Peter Stoergler, *Asma Poeticum Litaniarum Lauretanarum: Dedicatum Rvo: Hilarientium Praesuli D.D. Georgio* (Linz: Typis Joannis Paltauff, 1636).



incorporate mysteries attributed to the Madonna.<sup>203</sup> Whether the audience of the book understood all the meanings of Peter Stoegler's illustrations is not known, but there are certainly recognizable iconographic elements among them that also appear in the Wierix prints of the Litany of Loreto. On the title page of the *Asma Poeticum*, the Annunciation is depicted. Apart from the title indicating that this publication contains the Litany of Loreto, this is not evident from the image. There are no symbols of the litany visible, nor any references to the Holy House or the Madonna of Loreto.<sup>204</sup>

Two pages further on, the connection with the legend of the Holy House is made through an engraving featuring the Madonna and Child on the Holy House (figure 3.15.). Around the house, a procession is depicted, including a banner with the Jesuit logo, a banner with the monogram of the Madonna and a crucifix. The subsequent engraving shows the sculpture of the Madonna of Loreto, surrounded by praying people and again the banner with the Jesuit logo, the banner with the monogram of the Madonna and a crucifix (figure 3.16.). It is as if the procession in the first engraving has arrived at the Madonna of Loreto. It is quite possible that at Loreto, processions ending at the Madonna sculpture took place and that the Litany of Loreto was recited during these processions.<sup>205</sup> Another engraving shows a combination of the legend of the Holy House with the sculpture of the Madonna of Loreto on top (figure 3.17.).<sup>206</sup> Other recognizable symbols are the mirror, the Seat of Wisdom, the Rose, and the Tower of David.<sup>207</sup>

No similarities in form can be seen between the engravings in Stoegler's publication and those of the Wierix brothers of the Litany of Loreto. The publication was also released after all the Wierix brothers had passed away. However, the publication is once again by a Jesuit, demonstrating the connection between the Litany of Loreto and the shrine at Loreto, and indicates that Litany of Loreto was also something Austrians were familiar with at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

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<sup>203</sup> Carme López Calderón, "Symbols and (Un)concealed Marian Mysteries in the First Litany of Loreto Illustrated with Emblems: Peter Stoegler's *Asma Poeticum* (Linz, 1636)," in *Quid est secretum?: Visual Representation of Secrets in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1700*, ed. Ralph Dekoninck, Agnès Guiderdoni and Walter Melion (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 145.

<sup>204</sup> Stoegler, *Asma Poeticum*, frontispiece. Accessed online via <https://archive.org/details/asmapoeticumlita00stoe/page/n7/mode/2up>.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 30, 31, 36, 37.

### 3.5.3. Spain

As described in the second chapter, the Madonna is depicted as the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception in three of the six Wierix prints in combination with symbols based on Marian litanies (figures 2.7., 2.8. and 2.9.). The Immaculate Conception was a controversial and contentious issue during the Counter-Reformation, with Hapsburg Spain as a great defender of the Madonna's Immaculate Conception. It is therefore no coincidence that many Spanish artists, such as Diego Velazquez (1599-1660), depicted the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception in the seventeenth century.<sup>208</sup> The previous chapter has described the origins of this iconography. By the early seventeenth century however, this iconography became the predominant representation of the sinless conception of the Virgin in Spain. In a painting from c. 1580 El Greco depicts the vision of the Madonna to Saint John of Patmos as the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception, based on the Old Testament description of the Apocalyptic Woman, with symbols from the Marian litanies in the landscape under her.<sup>209</sup> Based on this information, could it be possible that the Wierix brothers became familiar with this Spanish iconography? A part of the roots of the Jesuit order are in Spain, so it is also plausible that the Wierix brothers were introduced to iconography through them.<sup>210</sup>

This seems plausible as, for example, Maarten de Vos, who designed many of their prints, including the fourth Wierix print (figure 2.7), engaged in substantial trade with Spain, producing paintings for Spanish patrons among others. The connection with the Jesuit order, which was obviously very strong in relation to the Wierix brothers, is also likely to have strongly influenced this iconographic choice.<sup>211</sup> Suzan Stratton even goes so far as to argue that, in turn, Spanish painters gained there designs from Wierix prints, such as a depiction of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception with Marian symbols by an unknown Spanish painter in the cathedral of Seville. Stratton argues that the composition of the painting is clearly based on the sixth engraving by Hieronymus Wierix.<sup>212</sup> This is an exciting idea, but the uncertain dating of both works would require further investigation. The Wierix brothers, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, were not the only ones portraying this iconographic type and the Jesuits also employed other engravers. For example, the print attributed to Cornelis Galle I (figure 3.12.) also shows

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<sup>208</sup> Rosilie Hernández, *Immaculate Conceptions: The Power of the Religious Imagination in Early Modern Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 4 and 77.

<sup>209</sup> Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Art*, 58-60.

<sup>210</sup> Krüger, *Kloosters en kloosterorden*, 363.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-63.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

great similarities to Spanish paintings of the Immaculate Conception (see figure 3.18. for an example). In the second chapter, the emblem of the printer in the Jesuit centenary book was engraved by Galle, which supports the argument as he was also clearly employed by the Jesuits.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> I would like to thank Charlotte Wytéma for pointing me in the direction of the iconography of the Immaculate Conception and the fifteen Marian symbols and the Spanish Hapsburgs.



Figure 3.13. Giacomo Lauro, *Descriptio Translationis Sanctae Domus Beatissimae Virginis e Nazareth in Dalmatiam et Inde Lauretum*, 1606. Object number: unkown. Volpini collection.

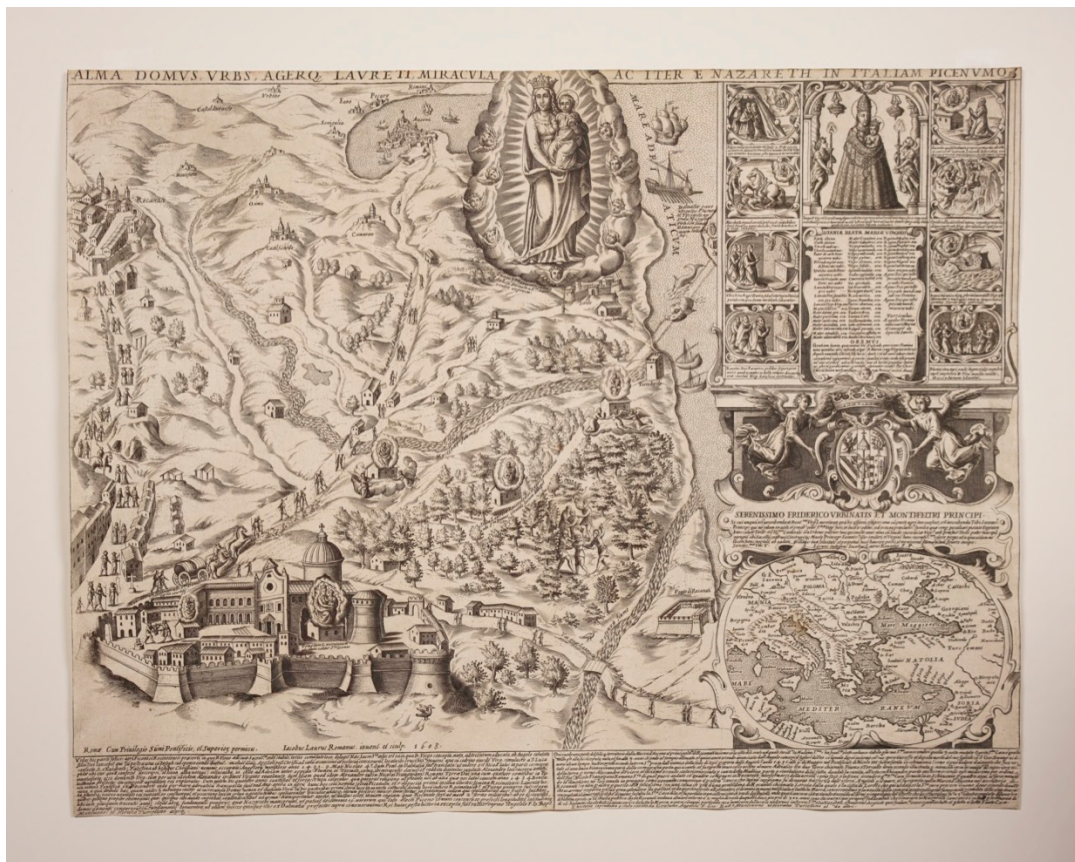


Figure 3.14. Giacomo Lauro, *Alma Domus, Urbs, Agerq[ue] Laureti, Miracula, ac iter e Nazareth in Italiam Picenumq[ue]*, 1608. Object number: unknown. The Johns Hopkins University Sheridan Libraries, Baltimore.

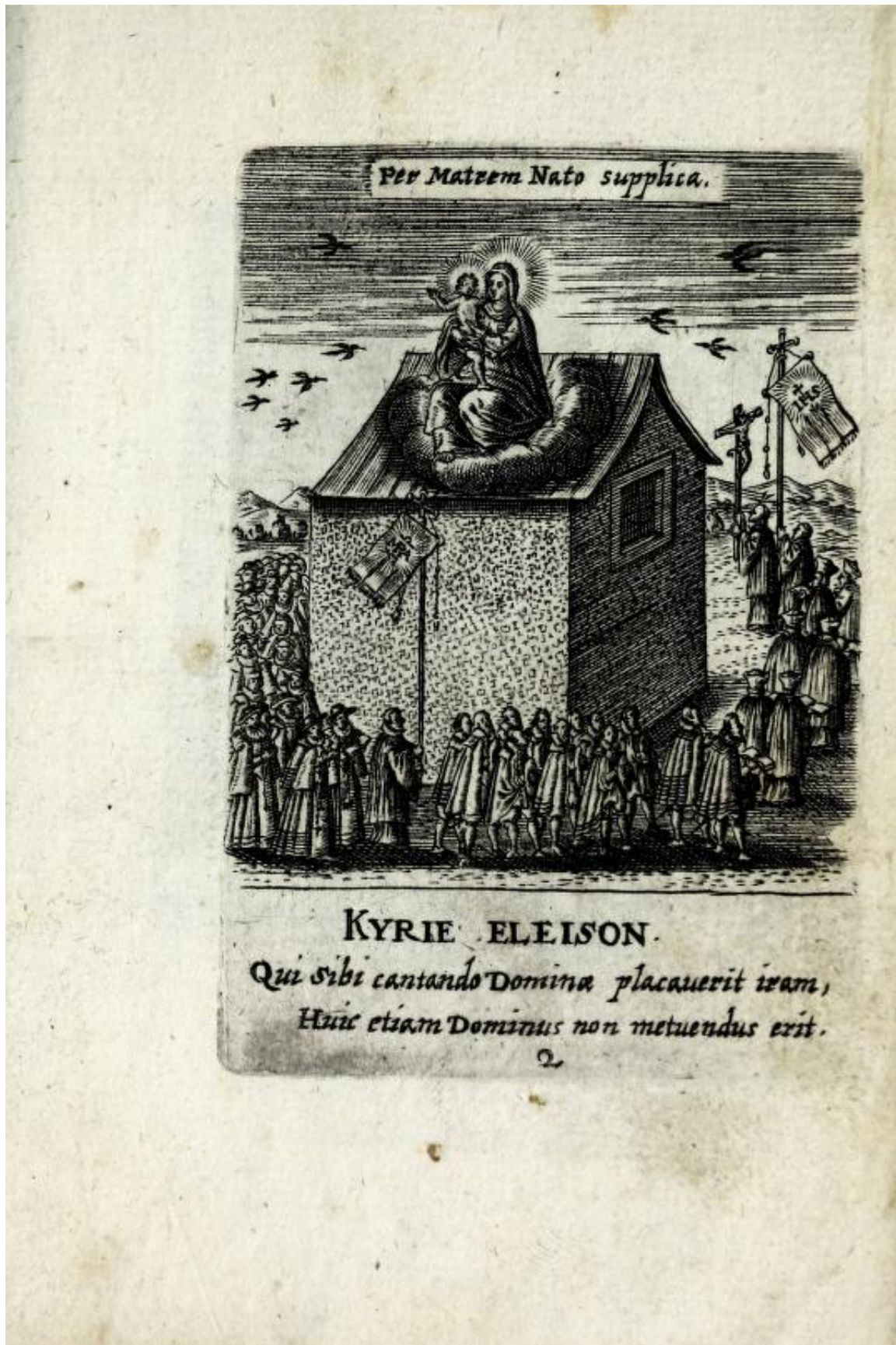


Figure 3.15. Anonymous, "Kyrie Eleison," in Peter Stoegler, *Asma Poeticum Litaniarum Lauretanarum* (Linz: Typis Joannis Paltauff), plate no. 2. Object number: unknown.



Figure 3.16. Anonymous, "Christe Eleison," in Peter Stogler, *Asma Poeticum Litaniarum Lauretanarum* (Linz: Typis Joannis Paltauff), plate no. 2. Object number: unknown.



Figure 3.17. Anonymous, "Domus Aurea," in Peter Stoegler, *Asma Poeticum Litaniarum Lauretanarum* (Linz: Typis Joannis Paltauff), plate no. 39. Object number: unknown.



**Figure 3.18.** Francisco Rizi, *The Immaculate Conception*, seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, 211 x 376 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Object number: P005025.

### 3.6. Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine the distribution and the intended function of the Wierix prints featuring the Litany of Loreto and to compare them with other prints, featuring the Litany of Loreto, from the Low Countries and beyond. It is very plausible that the Wierix brothers' prints, besides probably being sold by pedlars, taken by pilgrims and their image disseminated by copies, ended up outside Europe thanks to Jesuit missionaries who brought prints across international borders with them. The small Wierix prints of the Litany of Loreto were probably mainly intended for private devotion and meditation, as several primary sources have shown. A practice that was custom not only to Jesuits, but also within 'ordinary' families. Thanks to the Latin texts and fairly 'universal' iconographic elements, these prints were probably recognizable to many Catholics in the early modern world.

But the Wierix brothers were not the only ones creating prints with the Litany of Loreto or symbols from the litany in Antwerp and beyond, as is demonstrated in this chapter. In all of the images it is again striking that the Madonna of Loreto and the legend of the Holy House are depicted according to the same iconographic manner. Additionally, the combination of symbols from the Litany of Loreto with those from other Marian litanies appears frequently. The combination of symbols from Marian litanies with the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception



seems to be an iconographic type adopted from Spanish artists. It is even suggested in secondary literature that the Wierix brothers in turn influenced these Hispanic artists. An exciting notion that would be worth exploring further.

## Conclusion

This final chapter revisits the main research question of this thesis: what do the depictions of the Litany of Loreto, on six prints from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century by the Antwerp engravers and publishers Hieronymous and Antonie (II) Wierix, illuminate about the devotion around a miracle-working Madonna, associated with the Italian city of Loreto, in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Antwerp? A general conclusion and answer to this question will be provided first, followed by some suggestions for further research.

### **General conclusion**

The depictions of the Litany of Loreto in the six prints by the Antwerp engravers Hieronymus and Antonie (II) Wierix from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century provide significant insights into the devotion surrounding the miraculous Madonna of Loreto, and the Virgin Mary in general, in this period. These prints reflect not only the Marian devotion of their time but also the adaptability and resilience of the Loreto cult in a period of political and religious changes in Antwerp and beyond.

The Wierix prints reveal three primary iconographic types of depictions of the Loreto cult: the Madonna with the Christ Child on a flying house, the Madonna of Loreto as a statue, and the symbolic representations of the titles given to the Madonna in the Litany of Loreto. The latter underscores the universal appeal of the Loreto cult, as the symbols of the litany could be easily integrated into various religious contexts beyond the immediate association with the Loreto shrine.

This adaptability is mirrored in the histories of the legend of the Holy House and the Litany of Loreto. The flexibility of the Holy House of Loreto cult allowed it to be absorbed into different cultural and religious environments, contributing to its durability and widespread veneration as, amongst others, Karin Vélez and Erin Giffin have so clearly demonstrated in their research. The Litany of Loreto, though it became associated with the Loreto cult in the sixteenth century, did not always, and still not does, require a direct connection to the Madonna of Loreto, further enhancing its universal applicability.

The religious and political context of post-1585 Antwerp, under Spanish Habsburg control and characterized by a Catholic resurgence, is critical in understanding the significance of these prints. The Wierix brothers, who were initially Lutheran, shifted to producing predominantly Catholic religious imagery after the Fall of Antwerp, aligning with the broader

Counter-Reformation efforts to reinforce Catholic doctrine and devotion through visual art. The six prints in question are part of this broader phenomenon, with their universal iconography and Latin texts making them accessible and recognizable to Catholics across Europe and beyond.

The prints suggest a notable influence of the Jesuit order, which played a significant role in propagating Catholic devotion during this period. The small size of the prints, the Latin texts derived from the bible, and their iconographic elements suggest they were intended for private devotion and meditation, a practice common among Jesuits and Catholic families. The Jesuits likely contributed to the dissemination of these prints beyond Antwerp, potentially spreading them across international borders during their missions and enhancing the global reach of the Loreto cult.

While the Wierix brothers were not unique in creating prints featuring the Litany of Loreto within the Low Countries and beyond, their work illustrates the intersection of private and local devotion within broader Catholic practices. The recurring combination of symbols from the Litany of Loreto with those from other Marian litanies, and the influence of the Spanish iconography of the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception, highlights the interconnectedness of European religious art and the potential for cross-cultural artistic exchange, with suggestions in secondary literature that the Wierix brothers themselves may have influenced Hispanic artists.

In conclusion, the Wierix prints depicting the Litany of Loreto offer a window into the devotional practices surrounding the Madonna of Loreto, and the Virgin Mary in general, in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Antwerp and beyond. These prints, through their universal iconography, not only stimulated devotion of the Madonna in Antwerp but also contributed to the broader dissemination of the Loreto cult. The prints' widespread appeal underscores the resilience and adaptability of the Loreto cult and the Litany of Loreto, which could be, and still are, integrated into various religious contexts and practices.

### **Further research**

An initial proposition is not so much a subject for further research as it is a modification. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, titles of prints with symbols from Marian litanies on them often state that all the symbols derive from the Litany of Loreto. This makes sense as this is, still, the best-known and most widely used Marian litany. However, it is incorrect and diminishes the several textual sources underlying the iconography in such a print. It would therefore be useful if the responsible staff at museums, for example, were aware of this. These incorrect descriptions in

print titles have already been pointed out from time to time in the academic literature, such as fairly recently by Carme López Calderón.<sup>214</sup>

What has been missed while writing this thesis is a chronological overview of the developments of the text of the Litany of Loreto. The titles added over the years to the prayer, which is altogether understudied, are fairly numerous but each author seems to list different examples. Should further research be conducted on this litany in the future, it would be very helpful to create a chronological overview of the development of the Latin text.

The Wierix prints of the Litany of Loreto present ample opportunities for further research. Inspired by Sarah Moran's work, it would be fascinating to explore how devotional prints were utilized in domestic settings in early modern Antwerp. Investigating the similarities and potential differences in the presence and use of prints or other devotional objects within Jesuit confraternities compared to the homes of 'ordinary' Catholics would be particularly insightful. Inventories, for example, could prove invaluable for this research.

Finally, it would be highly interesting to conduct extensive research on the prints of the Wierix family from an international perspective. A first step could involve consulting archives and print collections in countries such as Spain, as well as China, Japan, or Paraguay, to investigate whether prints by the Wierix family are still present there. How far did the Wierix family's prints actually reach during the Early Modern Period? And what might this tell us about the Jesuits' missionary work, particularly from a colonial perspective?

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<sup>214</sup> Carme López Calderón, "La Virgen y los (mal) llamados símbolos de la letanía lauretana," *Atrio. Revista de Historia del Arte*, no. 29 (2023): 48-71. <https://doi.org/10.46661/atRIO.8538>.

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