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# Liturgical Spaces and Devotional Spaces: Analysis of the Choirs of Three Catalan Nuns' Monasteries during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

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**Abstract:** Choirs in female monastic and convent communities are spaces whose complexity has been highlighted because of their multipurpose and multifunctional nature. Although they are within the community's private sphere of prayer of the divine office, it has also been noted that they play a liturgical role as the space from which the nuns 'hear' and follow the celebrations taking place in the church and even in the choral altars. The devotional–liturgical binomial is joined by other contrasting terms, like *esglesia dintra–sgleya de fora*, indicating a duality, as follows: the claustration (as an enclosed, internal and private space of the nuns) and the external church accessible to priests and laypeople, as well as private devotion versus community devotion. The Poor Clares of the monastery of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara actually mentioned the choir altar as *nostro altar*, underscoring the close bonds that joined them to a liturgical table in this private space, as opposed to those of the *esglesia defora*. The objective of this article is to study the choirs of three female monasteries in Barcelona during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—Sant Pere de les Puel·les (Benedictines), Sant Antoni i Santa Clara and Santa Maria de Pedralbes (both Clarissan)—from a holistic standpoint, including spaces, functions, goods, furnishings and decorations.

**Keywords:** nun's monasteries; monastic choirs; liturgical spaces; devotional spaces

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## 1. Introduction

> '*Ítem* mes una porpra e frontal de cotonina negra ab brots d'or ab dues cortines negras, qui servexen al dia dels morts al altar nostro'
>
> '*Ítem* plus a purple and black cotton frontal with gold buds with two black curtains, which serve on the day of the dead at our alta' (AMSBM, MSCB, IC, 1437, vol. 31, no. 8, pp. 2–3)[1]
>
> 'Pagament a Joan Gilabert fuster per adobar el tabernacle de la Verge Maria qui està a q part del cor de les monges'
>
> 'Payment to Joan Gilabert carpenter to repair the tabernacle of the Virgin Mary, who is in the nuns' choir' (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1448–1449, no. 100, fol. 24r)[2]
>
> 'Primerament una custodia dargent daurada e esmaltada, ab diverses pedrés qui está dins al cor de les dones en que tenen lo Corpus Christi'
>
> 'Firstly, a monstrance of gilded and enamelled silver, with several stones, that is inside the choir of the women in which they have the Corpus Christi' (Anzizu 1897, pp. 76–84)

These references, which come from the documentation of the monasteries of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara, Sant Pere de les Puel·les and Santa María de Pedralbes of Barcelona are a sample of the sumptuousness and variety of goods, furnishings, sacred vessels and devotional images that the choirs in the female Catalan communities owned in the late

Middle Ages, while they also enable us to understand the range of devotional and cultural practices that took place there.[3]

The purpose of this article is twofold: on the one hand, to document the functional richness of monastic choir enclosures developed in monastic and convent communities for women and, on the other hand, to provide a set of information that allows us to understand the decoration of these spaces, as well as the liturgical furnishings and devotional images that they housed. Both of these aspects contribute to a deeper understanding of the liturgical and devotional practices of three female communities in Barcelona. These communities are the Benedictine monastery of Sant Pere de les Puel·les and the Clarissan monasteries of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara and Santa Maria de Pedralbes. The choice of these three monasteries is due to the fact that they preserve an exceptional collection of documents (which allows us to unearth information that has not been published before) that helps us to understand both the functional aspects relating to the use and practices developed in the choir enclosures and, above all, the dimension and connotations that these particular spaces had for the female monastic communities. The three convents were home to large communities of nuns and had close ties with both the royal family and the city's institutions, which supported them with generous donations.

Of these three monasteries, only the original building still remains at Pedralbes, where the community continues to reside. The monastery of Sant Pere de les Puel·les has undergone restorations that have altered its original layout and currently serves as a parish church, while the community of Benedictines live in the convent built in the neighbourhood of Sarrià in the late nineteenth century. Unfortunately, Sant Antoni i Santa Clara was severely affected by the siege of the city by Bourbon troops in 1713–1714 and was torn down in order to build the Citadel, a military compound constructed to dominate the city. Today, the community, which embraced the Benedictine Rule in 1515,[4] lives in the monastery of Sant Benet of Montserrat.

The document sources used to study these monasteries come from different bibliographic typologies. For Sant Pere de les Puel·les, we examined what are known as the abbess's books—account books—from the fifteenth century, systematically checking the sections on extraordinary expenses and some of the ordinary expenses. This work was complemented with the information provided by the document recording the pastoral visit of abbess Violant d'Espés to the monastic and parish church in 1585.[5] In the case of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara, the inventories of the sacristy and convent from 1337 to 1461 were used, along with sacristy books and modern documentation.[6] Finally, for Santa Maria de Pedralbes, we drew from the abundance of published materials and checked the inventories from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the Manuel Trens collection at the Diocesan Archive of Barcelona.

## 2. Liturgical and Devotional Function of the Choirs in the Female Communities

Despite the numerous publications in recent decades on the location and functions of the choirs in cathedrals and monasteries, many questions regarding the uses and practices undertaken in these spaces, especially in female religious communities, remain unanswered. To date, studies have primarily focused on analysing the location of the choir area, the functions of this space, the imagery and the pictorial decorations of the complexes conserved.[7]

The Latin term *clausus*, as well as its derivation claustration, is applied to monastic space that is closed off from the world, where nuns can concentrate their powers on the knowledge and love of God. Thus, when living cloistered, nuns died to the world and the evil it could entail and, instead, lived in a space of inner freedom that enabled them to experience their spousal call, that is, their consecration to Christ, the root of their vow of celibacy (Hamburger et al. 2008, p. 61). In fact, the claustration of female orders is a practice rooted in the very origins of female monasticism, which was also adopted by the mendicant Second Orders after the eighteenth century. However, because this is the community's private area, the historiography has belied a misogynistic bias based on theological texts,

which considered the female nature more inclined towards sin, specifically the carnal sins (Bruzelius 1992, pp. 83, 88; 1996, pp. 61–65; Volti 2007, p. 79; Hamburger et al. 2008, p. 45). This weakness and corruptibility is what made it imperative to devote effective material resources, described in the constitutions, to help to avoid all contact with the world in order to palliate the possible temptations and make it easier for nuns to remain faithful to the call to God.

The rules on claustration, set in the monastic rules, contain practical ordinances that guide nuns' relationship with the outside world. As C. Bruzelius noted, the enclosure wall, screens and choir curtains are aimed at preventing the nave and what happened there from being seen in order to safeguard the nuns' claustration and prevent any direct contact with the officiants and the parishioners attending the ceremonies (Bruzelius 1992, pp. 83, 88; 1996, pp. 61–65; Hamburger et al. 2008, p. 73). In fact, the emphasis in the Rule of Saint Clare and successive papal regulations of it is on strict claustration, which some have called the Clarissans' fourth vow. This spirit ended up permeating the Church, and, in 1298, Pope Boniface VIII issued the *Periculoso* decree, which extended to all female orders (Brundage and Makowski 1994, pp. 143–55; Makowski 1997) and established a stronger regulation of the discipline of claustration and which was later echoed in the Bull *Redemptor Noster* (1336), written by Benedict XII and dedicated to reforming the Order of St. Francis (Castellano 1994, pp. 539–50; quoted also by Mckiernan 2012, pp. 309–52).

As noted, the choir was an integral part of strict claustration; although, along with the *locutorium*, or parlour, it implied some relationship with the outside world that in practice turned it into a space of intersection. Its permeability came from the perception from the senses—hearing, smell and occasionally sight—of what was happening in the liturgy being officiated at the main altar (Hamburger and Suckale 2008, p. 97). Temple and choir were separated by a wall, which had an opening covered with a strong iron screen, often clad with a thick black curtain through which the nuns heard and followed the liturgical celebrations being officiated on the main altar. The sensorial perception was basically auditory, although after the thirteenth century, provisions granting the privilege to open the curtain at the time of the *elevatio*, during the eucharistic consecration, were frequent.

The historiography has drawn attention to the existence of altars in female choirs in the late Middle Ages and, therefore, within the claustration. Their purpose was to facilitate the nuns' adoration of the eucharist, thus offsetting the separation from and invisibility of the main altar, the reserved sacrament and the *elevatio* while mass was being celebrated.[8] In the Germanic world, several historians have noted that mass was held at the choir altar on the major feast days, although other researchers have questioned this.[9] As we shall see, the Catalan documentation corroborates that the eucharist was celebrated in certain liturgical periods and confirms the existence of monstrances among the choir goods, so we can conclude that this space also served a liturgical function. The liturgical nature of the choir explains the use in the documentation of expressions like *sgleya dintra* or *altar nostra*, which reveal the spatial and functional duality between the private space 'possessed' by the nuns and the temple open to laypeople, called the church or the outside altar.

Along with this liturgical dimension, the choir is, by antonomasia, the place of prayer of the divine office in community, adding a communal devotional dimension to a personal dimension fostered by the display of the Holy Sacrament in the monstrance in the upper choir, the presence of devotional images and the prescription establishing a personal prayer time after Matins or Prime (Hamburger et al. 2008, p. 73; Hamburger and Suckale 2008, p. 97).

## 3. Sant Pere de les Puel·les

The monastery of Sant Pere de les Puel·les is the oldest of the three analysed (Iranzo 1903, pp. 69–122; Paulí 1945; Morales 2007; Crispí 2020, pp. 93–125; Crispí forthcoming). Promoted by the Count of Barcelona Sunyer and Riquilda, it was founded in 945. It was originally one of the first female monastic communities established in Catalonia and was entrusted to the Rule of Saint Benedict. The raid by Almanzor in 986 must have affected the original building, and a new temple was built, which was consecrated on

23 January 1147. Even though the church still survives today, the damage it suffered in the modern age from attacks by troops that were set upon its northeast sector (Brugués 2015, pp. 177–95), the partial burning of the temple during *Tragic Week* (1909) and the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) make it difficult to distinguish the original elements from the historicist additions and remade parts that have transformed the original structure and decoration. To learn about the mediaeval building, we have to draw from graphic sources from the nineteenth century, such as planimetries, engravings or watercolours of the monastery, along with historical documentation.

It has traditionally been claimed that the church's original layout was a Greek cross, which received the addition of a polygonal apse at the chevet (eastern arm of the cross) and an entrance door on the southern arm in the fifteenth century.[10] The *quarterons* by the municipal architect Miquel Garriga i Roca reveal the building's layout in the mid-nineteenth century (Figure 1).[11] On the other hand, different watercolours by Lluís Rigalt, painted between 1869 and 1872, reproduce snippets of the interior of the temple (Figure 2) and precisely depict the western and northern sectors of the church, where two upper choirs can be discerned (Durá 2002, cat. 69, 71 and 72, pp. 45–46; Balanza et al. 2007, cat. 12, p. 50). They correspond to the last bay of the nave (west) and the northern arm of the transept. The main altar (located on the eastern part of the nave), probably the altar of the Virgin (southern arm of the transept), which served as a parish church, could be seen from choir spaces. Both choirs opened up to the temple under the arches holding up the dome over the transept. Of these two spaces, the one across from the altar of Saint Peter—the main altar—can be best distinguished in Rigalt's watercolours. It is an area with a rectangular shape with windows that open on the temple's southern façade. It was probably the nuns' choir, as we aim to prove.




**Figure 1.** Closeup of *quarteró* 40 by Miquel Garriga i Roca: layout of the monastery of Sant Pere de les Puel·les. Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona. AHCB. Fons Gràfics. Registre núm. 11458.



**Figure 2.** Interior of the church of Sant Pere de les Puel·les. Drawing by Lluís Rigalt (1869–1872). Reial Acadèmica Catalana de Belles Arts de Sant Jordi.

Different bits of information from the documentation attest to the fact that the Saint Peter's choir was an upper choir; the stone placed on the choir staircase is mentioned in 1424 (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1492–1493, no. 159, fols. 82v–83r.), and reference is made in 1492–1493 to the staircase going up to the choir, a location which has survived in the modern age, as attested to by the chronicles of royal sojourns at the monastery. One eloquent example is the visit by Philip III and Margaret of Austria in 1599; accompanied by the community, they 'went up' to the choir, where they watched the celebration being officiated on the main altar.[12] This location is corroborated by the references mentioning the roof of the choir, which the architect Bartomeu Orriols walked on in 1434–1435 to repair it (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1434–1435, no. 81, fol. 62r.).

On the other hand, we know that the choir had windows decorated with stained glass. Between 1417 and 1418, Agnès de Corbera administered the work being conducted in this space, including a payment to a master for the stained glass (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1417–1418, no. 60, fol. 72v).[13] In 1492–1493, specifically the painter Gil—most likely the renowned Gil Fontanet—was paid 3 *lliures* to repair the stained-glass windows (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1492–1493, no. 159, fol. 81v).[14] The choir must have been reached via one or two wooden doors which opened up onto the upper cloister, as mentioned in 1413–1414 (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1413–1414, no. 53, fol. 40), 1415 (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1415, no. 55, fol. 50v) and 1416–1417 (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, no. 59, fol. 74v).

In Rigalt's watercolours, the choir opens onto the nave with a low balustrade, but it must not have been mediaeval. The accounting books from 1494–1495 refer to several works in the monastery, including the banister of the choir with its screens, along with mention of the screen on the confessionals and the covering of the door connecting the church to the cloisters (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1494–1495, no. 165, fols. 51r–51v). The dates are significant given that they match the reform of the monasteries promoted by the Catholic Kings (particularly Zaragoza 2017, but see Zaragoza 1976, 1978, Zaragoza 2005–2006; Tobella 1964). In 1493, the monarchs appointed Juan Daza and the Franciscan friar Miguel Fenals as the general inspectors.[15] As a result, in 1497, the provincial chapterhouse of the

Congregation of the Cloistered Benedictines issued several rules aimed at reconducting and strengthening community life, while in 1500 two constitutions were enacted which established communal sleeping quarters.[16] Without a doubt, the reforms undertaken in the choir were related to the instructions issued by the inspectors in 1494 on how to strengthen claustration. The choir space, as a private space for the nuns that was inaccessible by anyone outside the monastic family, was also reflected in the pastoral visit of 1585, when the abbess noted that the inspectors did not go up to this space out of respect for the claustration.[17]

Within this spacious choir were the seats of the nuns and the girl altar servers, and therefore seating was required around 40–50 people, perhaps arranged in two rows (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1494–1495, no. 165, fols. 51r–51v). Under the seats were carpets that buffered the bitter cold of the Barcelona winter (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1492–1493, no. 162, fol. 75v). Community prayer in the divine office prescribed the reading of biblical texts, hymns and psalms, and the use of a lectern was needed for the readings, as mentioned in the 1492 documentation, when it was restored. At that time, Riambau Farrer built a hoist—a chain with a pulley—equipped with a lantern that illuminated the lectern. A small lead image of Saint Benedict, made by the silversmith Ramon Valls, was added to the hoist, while the polychrome and gilding were by master Franci (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1492–1493, no. 162, fol. 24v). Of these three artists, we can trace the career of the reputable Barcelona-based goldsmith Ramon Valls, documented between 1478 and 1503, who worked for the city government, the Council of One Hundred, and the brotherhoods and parish churches in the diocese (Dalmases 1992, vol. II, pp. 149–50).

Choir books are constantly mentioned in the monastery's accounting. Their daily use contributed to the wear and tear on the binding, hence the repeated repairs recorded in the account books, which basically consisted in 'resewing' the codices. The books mentioned include the book of offices, psalter, *collectarium*, *prosarium*, book of saints and three large communal books.

Thus far, the monastery documentation analysed reveals nothing exceptional in terms of the location and furnishings of the upper choir. However, a series of unusual documents points to the liturgical and devotional function of this space. The initial clue comes, once again, from the pastoral visit by Violant d'Espés, who went around to the temple's altars and the choir. In the latter, she inventoried the goods on the altar of Saint Agnes and Saint Scholastica, located in the nuns' choir:

> 'Primo un pàlit de taffatà vert ab una creu groga frisat en lo mitg. Ítem dues tovalloles petites, la una de orlanda brodada de or y de fil y l'altra de orlanda brodada de or y seda de diverses colors; Ítem altra tovalloleta de tela ab un passamà de seda de grana, les quals coses y ornaments dita senyora abbadesa a encomanades a la senyora Aldonça Oluja; *Ítem* dues stovalles de tela, la ab una [*sic*] ab benes de ret sobreposat, laltra tota llisa. Fa advertir que en la visita pasada fonch manat al beneficiat que les hores era que, complint lo manament, fes un cobrialtar sots pena de vint sous y may s'és fet y per avuy és molt ruí, y així dita senyora abbadesa li mana que per tot lo present mes de maig, sota la dita pena de XX sous aplicadors a la sacristia, fassa dit cobrialtar'
>
> '*Primo* a green taffeta pallium with a yellow cross fringed in the middle. *Ítem* two small towels, one of (. . .) embroidered with gold and thread and the other of (. . .) embroidered with gold and silk of various colours; *Ítem* another small cloth towel with a silk handrail of scarlet, which things and ornaments the said abbess has entrusted to Mrs. Aldonça Oluja; *Ítem* two cloth tablecloths, one [sic] with net bandages on top, the other all smooth. She points out that in the last visitation the beneficiary was ordered (. . .) that, fulfilling the order, to make an altar cover under penalty of twenty *sous* and it has never been done and the state is very bad, and, thus, the said abbess orders that for the present month of May, under said penalty of XX *sous* to the sacristy, to make said altar cover'[18]

The choir altar must have been dated from at least 1310, when, according to Paulí, abbess Gueralda de Cervelló (1296–1310) instituted a benefice devoted to these two saints (Paulí 1945, p. 71). We do not know the location of the altar, which may have been attached to the wall separating the choir from the church, as was common in other monasteries, or perhaps it was located in a room connected to it, as in Sant Antoni i Santa Clara. What the documentation does allow us to confidently state is that masses were held at the altar at certain times of year, because in 1443 the prioress paid the beneficiary of this altar, Bernat Efforça, 1 *lliura* and 13 *sous* for the celebration of mass during Lent on the altar of Saint Agnes (Paulí 1945, p. 71).[19]

The liturgical celebrations were accompanied by the music of two organs. In 1438, the organ's house is mentioned without any further details, but in 1451–1452, 60 *sous* were paid to the person who 'sona els orgues del nostre cor per l'ofici de les monges' (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1451–1452, no. 105, fol. 48v). Perhaps this is what was alluded to in 1492–1493 when a lock and key were made for the small organ (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1492–1493, no. 159, procura menor, fols. 82v–83r).

A series of references, which begin in 1448–1449, allude to the image of the Virgin that occupied a place of honour inside the choir. It had a 'house', covered by a tabernacle, which was repaired by the woodworker Joan Gilabert and, once again, mentioned in 1481–1482, when the construction of the tabernacle and the seat on which the Virgin is sitting are mentioned.[20] The information describes this structure as 'Mary's house'. Indeed, Paulí reports on the existence of a Virgin of the Choir as the dedicatee located next to the prioress's chair. Pere Serra i Postius reports on a miraculous story in which the Virgin had been moved from a place near the abbess's chair, where she had ordered it be put, to its original location next to the prioress, from which it could be seen by the parishioners.[21] The reference to Mary's chair is particularly relevant because it notes that this was a sculpture of Mary sitting, a typology more common in Romanesque than in Gothic carvings, although this does not necessarily prove anything. In 1585, six cloaks of the Virgin and four of the Christ Child are mentioned in the inventory of the nuns' sacristy, as well as crowns and necklaces for them (AMSPP, MSPP, LV 1585, fol. 5v, 7r). Although some of those cited may belong to the image of the Assumption in the temple, others must belong to the Virgin of the choir.

## 4. Sant Antoni i Santa Clara de Barcelona

The monastery of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara of Barcelona was the first establishment that the Second Order of Saint Francis, the Poor Clares, founded in Catalonia. The oldest reference dates from 1236, when Gregory IX issued a bull for the citizens of Barcelona asking them to give alms to the *sorores poenitentium* of San Damián in order to contribute to building their monastery (Fita 1895, doc. 1, pp. 277–78; Jornet 2007, pp. 155, 201). The document includes the names of Berenguela d'Antic and Guillerma Polinyà, which are joined by ten other women who must have been the members of the first community to subscribe to the Rule of Saint Clare. On 10 June 1237, the Bishop of Barcelona, Berenguer de Palou, granted the authority to build the monastery of Sant Antoni *ad honorem Dei et beati Antonii, confessoris de ordine minorum* (Fita 1895, doc. 3, pp. 279–80). The new building was located outside the walls in the southeast side of the town, bounded by the sea to the east and south, the path coming from Montgat and Badalona to the north and the *Rec Comtal* to the west. It was located in an area of Barcelona between the dynamic La Ribera neighbourhood and the sandy port area that was experiencing growth and expansion.

We know very little about the process of how the monastery was built. Only indirect references enable us to pinpoint the date and its layout, given that the only graphic document still conserved is the drawing by Joan Sentís, dated from 1715 to 1716 (Figure 3), when the monastery was being torn down to make way for the construction of the Ciutadella. By that time, it had already been severely affected by the siege of Bourbon troops.[22]

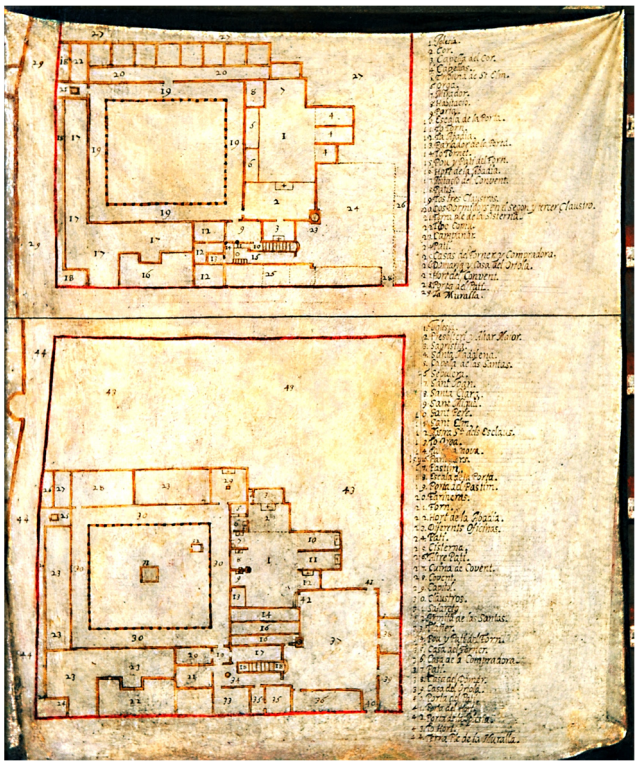


**Figure 3.** Layout of the monastery of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara of Barcelona by Joan Sentís (1715–1716) (AMSCB, MSCB).

We highlight the main milestones in the construction of the church based on the scant information provided by the documentation. Everything seems to point to the fact that it was started in 1237, thanks to the permission granted by Bishop Berenguer de Palou. Throughout the next two decades, privileges and indulgences arrived from the popes—Gregory IX, Innocence IV and Alexander IV—who took the monastery under their protection, as well as from the Archbishop of Tarragona and the Bishops of Barcelona, Vic and Girona. The purpose of these privileges was to secure alms that would contribute to defraying the construction costs while also facilitating visits by the faithful to the monastery, especially on the feast day of Saint Anthony of Padua, to whom it was dedicated.[23]

Did the construction proceed at a good pace? We have no information on this, although several references suggest that the community's economic situation was precarious, as follows: in 1256, the Bishop of Barcelona, Arnau de Gurb, earmarked a legacy to the nuns so that they could celebrate daily mass given that the community did not have the resources to maintain a presbyter (Jornet 2007, pp. 100, 148). In 1250, Innocent IV granted a privilege so that the monastery could bury worshippers (Fita 1895, doc. 29, p. 305; Jornet 2007, p. 128); this provision went into effect immediately and the documentation contains the last wishes of different benefactors who placed their tombs in the monastery with the consequent bequest.[24] The convent church must have been finished by around 1256 or 1257, as noted by N. Jornet,[25] based on the fact that the institution of benefices began to be documented, like those of Saint Anthony and Saint Francis in 1257,[26] Saint James in 1263–1264,[27] Saint Bernard in 1280[28] and Saint Clare in 1285.[29] Other references corroborate that construction must have been completed or been at an advanced stage. For example, the bull issued by Alexander IX on 20 March 1257 grants 100 days of indulgence to anyone offering alms to finish the monastery, which the pope described as 'sumptuous'.[30]

The community must have prayed the divine office and followed the eucharistic liturgy from the choir. A bull from 1257 grants the privilege of drawing the curtain from the claustration screen during consecration (Jornet 2007, pp. 124, 168). Was it a temporary choir? We do not know, but it may have been given that the choir was still under construction, as

suggested by the fact that in 1291 Gerarda de Riquer earmarked a generous donation *in opera cori*.[31] The question we have to ask is the location of that choir within the temple's topography. According to Sentís's sketch, the choir occupied the first floor at the base of the nave—it was an upper choir and had an altar attached to the wall separating this space from the church and an inner room with a second altar.

The 1358 inventory seems to confirm the upper location of the choir: 'Primerament té la Segristana demunt al cor', 'First of all, the sacristan has above the choir'.[32] The pastoral visit to the monastery in 1527 indicates the same location.[33] According to the aforementioned drawing, the choir was rectangular in shape and was reached from the upper cloister via a door located on the southern arm.

The inventories of the sacristy and the convent between 1337 and 1461 provide a great deal of information on the temple's liturgical goods and furnishings, as well as indirectly on its topography. The brief references to the place where the objects were stored and used enable us to understand the two worlds on either side of the tenuous line of female monasteries' claustration and the mental distinction that it meant for the community of Clarissans who resided there. Thus, the documentation states the existence of the choir altar, described as the *altar de dins* (1399) or the *nostro altar dins* (1437), in contrast to the *altar de fora*, which was also called the main altar or the Saint Anthony altar. Here is when this spatial duality of inside church/outside church begins, which is accentuated as the inventories progress over time.

Mass must have occasionally been celebrated in this upper choir, and, in fact, it was equipped with the linens prescribed by the liturgical rubrics. Thus, the 1358 inventory mentioned 'E una tella de drap de li que servex a lautar quant si diu missa al cor', 'And a linen cloth that serves the altar when mass is said in the choir' (AMSBM, MSCB, IC, 1358, plec 813, no. 16, p. 4), and this cloth reappears in subsequent inventories. In addition, there are other linens dressing the altar, as follows:

> 'Primo I cortina gran la qual serveix per cobrir l'altar de dins la qual és flocade, e bagues e anells'; '*Ítem* dues cortines barrades, les quals servexen al costat del altar de dins, mes una tela blancha la qual servex sobra l'altar de dins'; 'Ítem una capsa en la qual a IIII tovallolas, les dues son de seda ab listes totas d'or ab flocadura blancha e vermela per los caps, les quals servexen de dins [quant] l'altar nostro quant hi sta la orla'; '*Ítem* a en lo dessus dits calax dues cortines vermellas brodades d'or qui servexen al nostro altar ab floquedura blanque e vermella'; '*Ítem* mes IIII cortines barrades de vermell e de grog e flocades, qui servexen la I perell per l'altar de fora, l'altre per l'altar de dins'
>
> '*Primo* I large curtain which serves to cover the altar inside with tassels, bows and rings'; '*Ítem* two curtains with rods, which serve next to the altar inside, plus a white cloth which serves over the altar inside'; '*Ítem* a box in which there are IIII towels, two are of silk with lists all of gold with white and red flocking by the heads, which serve inside on our altar when the *frame (orla)* is'; '*Ítem* above the said drawers two red curtains embroidered with gold that serve in our altar with white and red flocking'; '*Ítem* on top of the said drawers two red curtains embroidered with gold that serve in our altar with white and red flocking'; '*Ítem* IIII curtains swept in red and yellow and flocked, which serve I for the altar outside, the other for the altar inside' (AMSBM, MSCB, IS, 1437, plec 31, no. 8, p. 2r–3v, 5)

During Lent, the altar was covered with linen or curtains:

> '*Ítem* a un altre plec gros lo qual servex de coresma per lo nostro altar dins'; '*Ítem* mes hi a dos bastons prims al cap de cascun bastó a dues corrioletas patitas qui servexen a tenir les cortinas qui stan al altar nostro de coresma'
>
> '*Ítem* another large fold that serves in Lent for our altar inside'; '*Ítem* plus two thin canes on the head of each cane with two small pulleys that serve to hold the curtains that are on our altar' (AMSBM, MSCB, IS, 1437, plec 31, no. 8, p. 2, 7v)

On the Feast of All Souls, 2 November, the linens were black, as follows: '*Ítem* mes una porpra e frontal de cotonina negra ab brots d'or ab dues cortines negras, qui servexen al dia dels morts al altar nostro'; '*Ítem* plus a purple and black cotton frontal with gold buds with two black curtains, which serve on the day of the dead at our altar'.[34] The celebration of Holy Thursday and Good Friday had to exude solemnity. The Clarissans had their own liturgical objects different to those for the main altar, which they used in the choir to decorate the monument on Holy Thursday and the cross or the Vera Cruz the next day. Sentí's drawing shows an inner chamber reached from the choir which was equipped with an altar. Even though the documentation is not precise, it may be what was called the 'cambra del cors preciós de Jhesus Crist'. This room, which appears in different inventories since 1406, may be equated with the one that housed a large white box for the Corpus Christi (1437), used as a monument after the celebration of the *Cena Domini*.

> '*Ítem* una capsa en la qual a IIII tovallolas, les dues son de seda ab listes totas d'or ab flocadura blancha e vermela per los caps, les quals servexen de dins [quant] l'altar nostro quant hi sta la orla, a [II] ni una de negra, e altre brodade de negra ab randa e flocade, servexen al digous Sant per la cambra del cors precios de Jhesus Xrist'
>
> '*Ítem* a box in which there are IIII towels, two are of silk with lists all of gold with white and red flocking by the heads, which serve inside in our altar inside when the *frame* (*orla*) is, and one of black, and another embroidered in black with lace and flocking, they serve on Holy Thursday for the stay of the Precious Body of Jhesus Christ' (AMSCB, MSCB, IS, 1437, plec 31, no. 8, p. 2v)

With regard to these spaces, the 1527 visit states the following: 'Visitarem lo sepulcra dedita sglesia lo qual es fora lo cor en que son dos capelles una dintra altra en la una es un crucifix en l'altra (. . .) esta al monument ab ses ymages'; 'We visited the sepulcher of the church outside the choir, there are two chapels one inside the other, in one there is a crucifix in the other (. . .) there is the monument with its images' (AMSPP, MSPP, LV 1585, fol. 74v).

The Good Friday liturgy included the adoration of the cross, as noted in 1437: '*Ítem* mes un sobra altar ab los caps brodats de seda negra, qui serveix al divendres Sant per adorar la Creu a nosaltres, de dins'; '*Ítem* plus an altar cover with embroidered heads of black silk, which serves on Good Friday to adore the Cross to us, from the inside' (AMSCB, MSCB, IS, 1437, plec 31, no. 8, p. 8v). Other linens related to the adoration are a white cloth (1389), cushions and silver embroideries used to display the *Vera Creu* (1389) or the towels used to cover it (1437), although the latter references may also be related to both the choir altar and the main altar.

The choir altar is described in the following detail in the 1399 inventory:

> '*Ítem* ha an le sgleya dintra an l'altar I camisa e I tovala e un pali e un frontal e un tepit blau e un retaula, tot asò és per tot dia, e un retaule per la Corema he II pilarets de fust, e I post lar qui fosse lo retaule, he I custodia de Nostro Senyor d'argent ymaltade'
>
> '*Ítem* there is in the church in the altar I shirt and I towel and a pallium and a frontal and a blue carpet and an altarpiece, all this is for each day, and an altarpiece for Lent and II wooden pillars, and I long board that was of the altarpiece, and I monstrance of Our Lord of enamelled silver' (AMSCB, MSCB, IC, 1399, plec 813, no. 18, p. 13r)

This document points to the existence of frontals, palls and at least two altarpieces. Other inventories record small pieces—*post*, *taula* and *troços de retaules*—which served as altarpieces for certain feast days and were placed directly on the liturgical table. Furthermore, the choir altar seems to have had a movable element that could be assembled and disassembled, called the *orla*, which must have been used on certain feast days.[35] It is mentioned beginning in 1389 and was kept in a cabinet in the church doorway. Therefore, we can deduce that it was a wooden structure that had several compartments. At least four

pieces and four beams are described in this way (1399): 'IIII peçes he V cabirons de la orla del altar'; 'IIII pieces and V beams of the altar *frame (orla)*' (AMSCB, MSCB, IC, 1399, plec 813, no. 18, p. 13r.). The inventories record the existence of monstrances for the adoration of the Corpus Christi. One of them, as mentioned above, was on the choir altar in 1399 but had been mentioned since 1358: 'Primerament té la Segristana demunt al cor (. . .) I custòdia d'argent ab esmalts en què està lo Corpus Xristhi'; 'First, the Sacristana has in the choir (. . .) I silver monstrance with enamels in which is the Corpus Christi' (AMSCB, MSCB, IC, 1358, plec 813, no. 16, p. 4).[36]

Once again, the 1437 inventory, made by the sacristan Elionor Rajadell, provides us with invaluable information on the image of the Virgin in the choir, as follows:

> 'Primo te la Verge Maria una corona d'ergent deurada [ab] sobra lo cap, e sta ligade ab tot son compliment, ço son arrecades de perlas [e ra ]d'ergent e de pedras, lo collar es de pedres blaves e blanchas, te en la mà un ram de seda de moltas colors ab lo peu vert e daurat; *Ítem* te Nostro Senyor un barret al cap de brocat d'or ab brots de perlas e pater nostros de coraul'
>
> 'First, the Virgin Mary has a crown of silver gilt [ab] on her head, and is adorned with all that is necessary, that is, earrings of pearls (. . .) of silver and stones, the necklace is of blue and white stones, she has in her hand a bouquet of silk of many colours with green and golden foot; *Ítem* has Our Lord a hat on his head of gold brocade with pearl buds and coral' (AMSCB, MSCB, IS, 1437, vol. 31, no. 8, p. 10v)

This is a sculptural image of Mary, bejewelled and dressed in precious clothing. Even though this garb has been studied in a previous publication, we should underscore its uniqueness, as it is characterised by a typological diversity of pieces that encompass both jewellery made of precious metals and stones and sumptuous cloth garments of colours and materials that changed in line with the liturgical feast. As an example, the following are mentioned: cloaks, mantels, coats, cloches, girdles, greatcoats, sashes, breastplates, ear ornaments, bracelets, earrings, caps, *crencha*, *departidores*, irises and bouquets. These pieces appear in the earliest inventory conserved (1337) and only increase in number until a total of 45 are recorded in 1437.

It was the sacristan's job to 'dress' the sculptures, ensure their goods were in proper condition and repair them when needed. This is stated by Sebastià Roger in 1589: 'Tenen carrec de vestir Nostra Senyora en lo altar del cor'; '(They) have the task of dressing Our Lady at the altar of the choir'[37] and is reflected in the sacristy books when they record the payments made for repairs of the crown or dresses, as follows:

> '*Ítem* adobar la corona de nostro senyor entre refermar los estels e les pedres de argent metre per refermar les dites steles costa entre tot, VII s' (1393)'; '*Primo* compri una pedra per la corona de nostra dona, I s'; '*Ítem* fiu folrar e adobar lo mentall de nostra dons blau costa, VII s' (1457–1464)
>
> '*Ítem* to repair the crown of Our Lord between securing the stars and the silver stones, to secure the said stars cost among all, VII s' (1393); "*Primo* bought a stone for the crown of Our Lady, I s"; "*Ítem* she had lined and repaired the blue mantle of Our Lady blue costs, VII s" (1457–1464)'[38]

The monastery church had two Marian images permanently displayed on the altars. One of them was probably the namesake of the Saint Mary altar in the temple, as documented since 1279.[39] The second image was venerated in the upper choir near the altar given that according to the 1527 visit, it was devoted to Mary. It was unquestionably the sculpture located over a cabinet that served as its pedestal. In 1399, the following is mentioned: 'armariet ius lo peu Mare de Déu', 'a small cupboard under the foot of the Mother of God',[40] a piece which reappeared in the subsequent inventories. Other records allude to a dome that covered the sculpture, as follows: '*Ítem* mes una camisa la qual sta sobra lo tabernacla de la mare de Deu' (1437), '*Ítem* plus a shirt that is over the tabernacle

of the mother of God'. We cannot provide any further details on the type of statue given that the inventories mention neither its material nor its iconography. However, they do record several pedestals or bases for the image, as well as the attribute it was supposed to be holding:

> '*Ítem* I peu de fust pintat an que stà madone Sancta Maria ab I clau de fero' (1406); 'altre peu pedra per la ymaya de madona Santa Maria ab I clau' (1410); 'I ram d'argent i de peras qui madona Sancta Maria té en la mà' (1366); 'I Ram de madona Sancta Maria d'argent ab peres de vidra ab lo peu d'argent' (1399)
>
> '*Ítem* I painted wooden foot where Madonna Sancta Maria is with I iron nail' (1406); 'another stone foot for the image of Madonna Sancta Maria with a nail' (1410); 'I bouquet of silver and stones that Madonna Sancta Maria has in her hand' (1366); 'I bouquet of Madonna Sancta Maria of silver with glass stones with silver foot' (1399) (AMSCB, MSCB, IS, 1406, vol. 31, no. 3, p. 9r; 1410, p. 5v; 1366, plec 813, no. 17, p. 9r and 1399; 1399, plec 813, no. 18, p. 113r)

The allusion to a foot for the Virgin's bouquet may initially lead us to think of a sculpture of Mary standing; however, the sacristy books contain two references that point to the opposite, as follows: '*Ítem* fiu despesa com posaran madona a la cadira per fil cayes e altres coses, VI d' and '*Ítem* doni a I traginer qui porta e torna los draps qui serviran con posaran madona a la cadira, VIII d'; '*Ítem* spent for thread cane and other things when they will put Madonna on the chair, VI d' and '*Ítem* gave to I muleteer that carries and returns the fabrics that will serve with when they will put Madonna on the chair, VIII d' (AMSCB, MSCB, LS, 1457–1464).

One surprising bit of information on the Virgin of the choir points to the fact that it was a Virgin tabernacle, as follows: 'Pere Diez, àlis Lor, argenter reconeix haver cobrat l'import d'una capsa d'argent per guardar hòsties consagrades, fet per ell al pit d'una imatge de la Verge que és al cor del monestir de Santa Clara'; 'Pere Diez, àlias Lor, silversmith, acknowledges having charged the amount of a silver box to keep consecrated hosts, made by him on the chest of an image of the Virgin Mary that is in the choir of the monastery of Santa Clara' (Dalmases 1992, vol. 2, doc. 253, p. 296). Even though this typology of Marian images is documented in other regions, its presence in the choir is particularly important given that the presence of the reserved sacrament makes the sculpture holier than what a mere image could be. On the other hand, the theological density of Virgin tabernacles allows for multiple symbolisms: Mary is the true Arc of the Covenant as a receptacle that contains Jesus Christ, the Mother of God, underscored by her pregnancy, as well as the mystery of the Incarnation and the second person in the Holy Trinity's adoption of human nature (Trens 1966, pp. 493–96; Llompart 1966, pp. 291–303; 2020, pp. 61–86). For all these reasons, we can establish a parallel between the altar and the image tabernacle and a correlation between the practices of dressing the image and dressing the altar; hence, the consonance of colours in the garb of the Virgin tabernacle and the frontals and palls of the altar. The Marian image, thus, takes on a liturgical function, which justifies why she is crowned by a tabernacle, just as she is on other altars (Español 2002; M. Sureda 2020; Gutiérrez Baños 2020; Kuhn 2020).

The choir space also had to have seats. We have no information on this furniture, although there is reference to the lectern, which must have been a large wooden piece inside which books and liturgical objects were stored. After 1437, the lectern has two cabinets:

> 'Lo faristol de las canto(re)s on a dos armaris. Primo ha en lo primer armari on stan los calzes milors son IIII los III son deurats, l'altre es tot blanch, *Ítem* una albadina de cuyro blanch on sta l'ansenç, *Ítem* una capsa blancha on sta l'ansenç. *Ítem* tres claus qui son tanidors del ciri del fas, *Ítem* una farceyosa ab I gran aste e dos anells de ferro per retanir trobaroeu sobra l'ermari de la sacrestia, *Ítem* mes un altre ferteyosa patita qui serveix a tots diez, *Ítem* un perell de bacines de leutó qui servexent per la promició de las shorts; *Ítem* mes lo libra del confessor; *Ítem* en lo segon armari a V calzes, los III son blanchs e los dos deurats; *Ítem* hi a un

> ensenser d'argent ab son compliment; *Ítem* una barqueta de argent ab I culera d'ergent. *Ítem* mes hi es lo Detari. En lo dit ermari no a pus'
>
> 'The lectern of the singers has two cupboards. *Primo*, the first cupboard has the best chalices, there are IIII, the III are golden, the other is all white; *Ítem* an *albadina* of white leather where is the incense; *Ítem* a white box where is the incense *Ítem* three nails that has the candle of the *fas*; *Ítem* a small (. . .) (*farceyosa)* with a large shaft and two iron rings to touch are on the closet of the sacristy; *Ítem* plus another small (. . .) (*ferteyosa)* that serves for every day; *Ítem* a pair of brass basins that serves for the promotion of the lots; *Ítem* plus the book of the confessor, *Ítem* in the second cupboard there are V chalices, III are white and the two golden. *Ítem* a silver censer with everything necessary; *Ítem* a little silver boat with a silver spoon; *Ítem* more is the Detari. In the said cupboard there is nothing else'

Apart from the books for the lectern, the inventories contain a long list of volumes, which have been studied by B. Garí and N. Jornet (Garí 2017; Garí and Jornet 2017). Some of these codices were chained to the altar or the chairs, which reveals their regular use and the explicit wish that they not be taken out of the choir or lost: '*Ítem* feu fermar un libre ab I cadena en lo cor ab ferro quey fiu anadir costa entre tot I s', '*Ítem* (she) ordered to fasten a book with iron chain in the choir cost between all I s' (1393); 'altres V Saltiris fermats ab cadena', 'other V Psalters fixed with chain' (1399) (AMSBM, MSCB, LS 1393, and IC, 1399, plec 813, no. 18).

Objects related to the administration of the sacraments were kept inside the cabinet of the Virgin and the lectern. The location of the choir on the upper storey of the cloister helped the presbyters to anoint the ill and administer the Viaticum to the nuns who were experiencing dire health crises: 'e una altra tela qui serveix a les dones con combreguen al lit', 'and another cloth that is used by women when they commune in bed' (1358); 'on stan dos barralets de l'oli infirmorum', 'where there are two containers of the oil of the *infirmorum* (1437).[41] The references to linens used for this act corroborate that the Clarissans received communion in the choir or a nearby place:

> 'e IIes tovayoles qui servexen a les dones al combregar', 'and the towels that serve women at communion' (1358); '*Ítem* dues canadellas da vidra ab dos ciris blanchs ab dos claus qui servexen a les ditas donas com gopreguen', '*Ítem* two glass mass cruets with two white candles with two nails that serve the said women when they receive communion' (1389), '*Ítem* mes una tovallola blancha largua, rendada e flocada, qui serveix a les monges quant les conbreguen', '*Ítem* plus a long, white, flocked towel, which is used by the nuns when they receive communion', 'Ítem mes una tovallola blancha encanyisade qui servex al conbregar de las monges a la esglesia', '*Ítem* plus a white towel (. . .) used for communion for the nuns in the church' (1437) (AMSBM, MSCB, IC, 1358, plec 813, no. 16, p. 4; IS, 1389, vol. 31, no 2, p. 5r; IS, 1437, vol. 31, no. 8, p. 8v–9r)

The summons to the choir for prayer at the canonical hours were announced with the bell tolling, as follows: '*Ítem* compri corda per la squela devant la porta del cor, I sou VIII d', '*Ítem* bought rope for the bell in front of the choir door, I *sou* VIII d' (AMSCB, MSCB, LS, 1457–1464). The nuns had to sit in their chairs, at the feet of which were rugs: '*Ítem* fiu fer X stores petites per les cadires X s', '*Ítem* made X small carpets for the chairs X s', which could be removed and replaced and might need cleaning or restoration, as follows: '*Ítem* doni a I hom e I dona qui levaran les stores del cor, II s' and '*Ítem* doni al astorer qui adoba les stores dins e defora, VI s'; '*Ítem* gave to a man and a woman that will take the carpets out of the choir, II s'; '*Ítem* doni al astorer qui adoba les stores dins e defora, VI s, VI d', '*Ítem* gave to the person who repairs the carpets inside and outside, VI s, VI d' (AAMSCB, MSCB, LS, 1457–1464).

The choir space was illuminated with lamps trained on the altar and the Marian image, but they also helped the Clarissans pray the liturgy of the hours, as follows: '*Ítem* compri dues lanties de vidra per lo nostro cor per posar a la hon staven les dargent, II s', '*Ítem*

bought two glass chandeliers for our choir to put where the silver ones were, II s'. Some of these lamps hung from the ceiling from chains, as follows: 'Ítem feu adobar les cadenes a la hon pengen les lanties', '*Ítem* had the chains on which the lamps hang repaired', while others were raised and lowered with a system of ropes, as follows: 'Ítem compri corda per una lantia del cor de les de argent a raó de X diners la ll pesa V lliures, IIII s, IIIIv', '*Ítem* bought rope for a silver choir lamp at the rate of X diners ll weigh V *lliures*, IIII s, IIIIv' (AMSCB, MSCB, LS, 1457–1464). The choir, just like the church, was swept and decorated for important feast days on the liturgical calendar and for their patrons, as once again revealed by the sacristy books:

> 'Ítem donia una dona qui ascombra lo cor e feu beles les lanternes per a Nadal, VIII d'; 'Ítem compri rama per enremar lo cor a nadall, II s'; 'Ítem doni a hun home qui scombra la sgleya de dintra e de fora per la festa de sent Anthoni de Padua, 1s, VI d'
>
> 'Ítem gave to a woman who sweeps the choir and made beautiful lamps for Christmas, VIII d; 'Ítem bought a branch to bind the choir for Christmas, II s"; 'Ítem gave to a man who sweeps the church inside and outside for the feast of Saint Anthoni of Padua, 1s, VI d' (AMSCB, MSCB, LS, 1457–1464)

## 5. Santa Maria de Pedralbes

The monastery of Santa María de Pedralbes was founded by Queen Elisenda de Montcada (1292–1364), who had the steadfast support of her husband, James II (1267–1327) to create and endow it. The monarchs' staunch determination was manifested in the speed with which the Church permits were issued to found it, purchase the land and build the church, whose first stone was laid on 26 March 1326, while it was consecrated barely a year later, on 3 May 1327.[42] The official ceremony was presided over by the archbishop of Toledo, infante John of Aragon, the son of James II, accompanied by the bishops of Barcelona, Vic and Huesca, the monarchs themselves and the uppercrust of the Catalan nobility (Mestres 1882, p. 11; B. Bassegoda 1922, p. 16; Escudero 1988, p. 8; Castellano 1998, pp. 39–41). Even though the church must have been completed immediately thereafter, the architectural project reflects a unity of conception in terms of its structure, no doubt favoured by the quick building process.[43] It is a building with a single nave with seven bays and three side chapels flanking the central space, a polygonal apse and a triple choir (two at the end of the nave, known as the upper choir and the lower choir, and a third located in the centre of the nave for beneficiaries, which was in use by the sixteenth century (Figures 4 and 5).

Unfortunately, neither the construction logbook nor the notary manuals from this initial period have survived, so it is impossible to learn about the evolution of the construction process. Both A. Nualart and A. Castellano have proffered the hypothesis that the building may have proceeded opposite to the usual sequence, that is, working from the west to the chevet, given that the westernmost parts of the temple were the initial space of worship until construction was complete (Nualart 2006, p. 30; Castellano 2011, p. 14; 2014, p. 109). Regardless, the definition of the upper choir on the far western end of the nave was part of the temple blueprint designed by the anonymous 'master builder of Pedralbes'. Different authors have cited its forerunners as the Santa Maria Donnaregina convent in Naples, which was consecrated in 1320 under the auspices of Queen Mary of Hungary,[44] but it was not an innovative design given that, as seen above, in Barcelona we find it at least in Sant Pere de les Puel·les and Sant Antoni i Santa Clara (Acuña and Conejo 2002, p. 204). However, what clearly distinguishes Pedralbes is that the architectural complex exudes unity and a clarity of conception that did not seem to exist in Santa Clara judging from the layout of the temple as Sentís drew it.

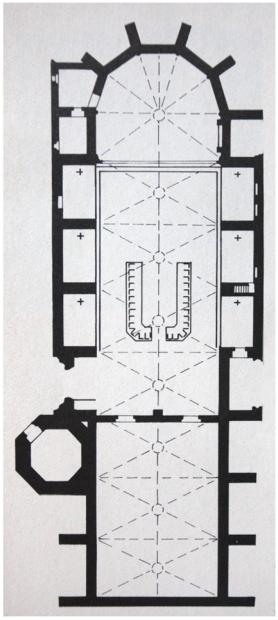


**Figure 4.** Layout of the church of the monastery of Pedralbes. Josep Oriol Mestres i Esplugas. Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona. AHCB. Fons Gràfics. Registre núm. 06033.



**Figure 5.** Closeup of the Choir of the monastery of Santa Maria de Pedralbes.

The Pedralbes community, just like the majority of Clarissan convents,[45] followed the Rule approved by Urban IV in 1263, a Catalan version of which exists in the monastery itself (González and Rubio 1982). It prescribes that the choir be closed off from the church via a strong, thick iron screen (*graa*, *graus*) with spikes on the outside and a central door that can be closed with a lock and key, and that it only be opened when the priest administered the sacrament of communion to the nuns, when preaching or on other exceptional occasions (González and Rubio 1982, pp. 37–38). The screen also had to have a black curtain that prevented the nuns from seeing outside in order to preserve their life of seclusion and the spirit of prayer that characterises the order.[46]

Even though the Rule prescribed strict regulations on claustration, the documentation exhumed points to nonreligious uses of the choir. C. Sanjust records that it was the site of community gatherings and even the signature of *violaris* in the early fifteenth century (Sanjust 2010, p. 193), replacing the function that the chapterhouse should have served because it was being built in the second decade of the century. The most singular event held there was unquestionably Jaume March's investiture as a knight. This stretched far beyond the functions defined for the choir in the Rule and can only be justified by the fact that, because it was founded by a royal, the queen played the role of promoter and set the fundamental lines of community life with her four *Ordinacions* and other personal provisions, at times interfering in the governance of the nuns.[47] The facts that after her husband's death in 1327 she withdrew to her own quarters—*lo palau*—next to the cloistered nuns and continued to perform certain social functions, even though she had secluded herself, demonstrate the uniqueness of this monastery in the early decades of its life. The aforementioned celebration was held in 1360 when King Peter the Ceremonious (1319–1387) decided to proclaim one of his confidence men, Jaume March, knight, and chose Pedralbes and particularly the upper choir as the site of the ceremony.[48] There is a narrative that recounts the ritual in first person (Bofarull 1911; Cantarell et al. 2011, doc. 49, pp. 232–38). The ceremony, preceded by a night of vigil for the future knight, took place on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 8 December, and was presided over by the archbishop of Catllar, who celebrated the prescriptive mass of the Holy Spirit at the choir's altar before the community of Clarissans, Elisenda de Montcada, the monarchs, Friar Peter of Aragon and different noblemen from the kingdom. After reading the epistle, Jaume March went to the altar, where the monarch conferred the rank of knight on him, and then proceeded to the celebration of the eucharist. The explicit allusion to the choir altar, once again, confirms the full use of this space in 1360.

> 'D Axí que el dimarts aprés, que era ffesta de la Concepció de madona Sancta Maria, vene lo dit senyor rey, secretament, fort ab poques persones per fer-me cavaller e, ensemps ab la dita senyora reyna dona Elizén, entrà dins lo monestir de les dones. Axií que volch que tothom qui hi fos entrassen dedins lo monestir de les dones, per ço que u vissen e en lo cor de les dones fou fer l'offici, e fore-hi aquests qui s segexen: (…). E en presència de totes les persones damunt dites, lo dit senyor rey fou comensar la missa de Sant Esperit, axí que, com hagueren dita l'Apístola, lo dit senyor se acostà a l'altar e yo, axí mateix'
>
> 'On Tuesday, which was the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, the said king came secretly with some people to make me a knight, and together with the said queen, Elizén, he entered the convent of women. So he wanted everyone who wanted to enter the convent to see it, and in the choir of the women he had the *officio* celebrated (…). And in the presence of all the aforementioned persons, the said Lord King ordered the Mass of the Holy Spirit to begin, and when they had read the Epistle, the said Lord approached the altar and I did so' (Cantarell et al. 2011, pp. 235–36)

A. Castellano has studied the history and life of the community, sketching out the main lines of the prayers of the hours and their temporal distribution throughout a day (Castellano 1998, pp. 319–22). They ranged between Matins at around midnight, or dawn

if they were joined by Lauds, and Compline at sundown. Some of the minor hours may have been initiated in the refectory, such as Sext and Compline. The Rule issued by Urban IV, following the guidelines of Saint Clare, prescribed that the nuns should sing the divine office and replace it with a certain number of Our Fathers if they were unable to read (González and Rubio 1982, p. 32). The Clarissans of Pedralbes added the prayers for the soul of James II and others dedicated to Elisenda de Montcada after her death to the canonical hours. In her *Ordinacions*, the queen stipulated that seven penitential psalms be said every day with the litanies after Matins, the Hours of Passion or the Holy Cross and the funeral mass, in addition to the song at the two daily masses, which were held at the main altar—another was added to the convent mass on the monarch's behalf—plus the weekly procession around the cloister and the *absolta* for the remission of the sins of both monarchs, before Elisendade Montcada's tomb.[49]

The earliest information on the Clarissans' choir dates from the 1330s. In both cases, they were donations made by nuns in the community: Sister Constança Vilardell offered three psalters in 1335 (Anzizu 1899, according to AMP, *Llibre de defuncions*; Castro 1968, p. 433; Castellano 1998, p. 319; Sanjust 2010, p. 389), and, three years later, Constança Soguera donated the altarpiece for the choir (Anzizu 1897, p. 59; Castro 1968, p. 412; Baqué 1997, p. 74; Castellano 1998, p. 222; Español 2001, p. 346; Carbonell et al. 2005, p. 25; Sanjust 2010, p. 217). This second donation may reveal that this private space was now suitable for regular use, and, as a consequence, it could be given the furnishings and goods needed for the convent's celebrations and prayers. The fact that the abbess, Francesca Saportella (1336–1364), asked Arnau Bassa to paint the wall enclosing the choir with a particular iconographic programme outlined in the contract corroborates that construction was completed (Anzizu 1897, p. 89; Sanpere i Miquel 1921, vol. 1, p. 253; Trens 1936, docs. XXVII, XXVIII, pp. 176–77).

The upper choir had wooden seats. Even though we do not know when they were built, reforms were reported by 1412, as follows: in 1422 the woodworker Domingo Blasco was paid 40 *sous* for a new project, and, one year later, more work was undertaken there (Sanjust 2010, pp. 216–21, based on Anzizu 1899, p. 293) The last information on the Gothic choir dates from 1864, when the bishop of Barcelona and Josep Puiggarí visited the monastery and were able to see the abbot's throne.[50] In 1987, a ray of lightning penetrated the choir and damaged the chairs (Sanjust 2010, p. 218, based on Anzizu 1899). Even though there is no documentary evidence confirming it, fragments of these furnishings may be identified in the sculpted wooden panels conserved at the Cleveland Museum, as discovered by F. Español (2001). This would be the side of an abbess's throne with different reliefs showing Saint Francis receiving his stigmata, two women saints—one of them identified as Saint Clare and another young one holding the palm frond of martyrdom (Saint Eulalia?)—and a Saint Michael fighting the dragon. The other two fragments may correspond to two chairs from the seating. According to this author, the style of the reliefs connects with one of the artists who participated in the tomb of Elisenda de Montcada, so chronologically it could correspond to the governance of Francesca Saportella, the abbess who must have promoted the decoration and refurbishment of the monastic choir.[51]

The existence of these seats, whose author may have worked in the monastery in the mid-1300s, corroborates the use of this space around that time. As discussed above, the first information on it dates from 1335, when Sister Constança Vilardell donated three choir books. We can detect choir books being crafted or repaired in the first two decades of the fifteenth century as part of different interventions due likely to the reform of the community. Thus, in 1411, Ramon Samer purchased 55 psalters (Sanjust 2010, pp. 68, 390, based on Anzizu 1899, p. 293); in 1415, a significant amount was paid for two parchments that were used in a choir psalter and for the chain for another psalter (Sanjust 2010, p. 390); in 1420, an *Oficiero* was made; in the mid-1400s, new repairs were made, including four large choir books. The sheer volume of books used by the Clarissans becomes clear with the mention of the 30 copies contained in a box located in the choir which was moved during the Civil War (1462–1472) (Sanjust 2010, pp. 71, 390).

The impossibility of seeing the main altar and its altarpiece due to the wall and the screens closing it off from the nave must have been offset by the choir's decoration and furnishings, such that through their figuration and the beauty and sumptuousness of their materials, these elements were a visual resource for attracting and reaching the spiritual goods and, thus, acted as a stimulus for the nuns' piety. One of these visual resources were the keystones on the vault of the nave, whose series begins in the wall enclosing the church over the upper choir. The first keystone bears a representation of Christ in Majesty raising his arms and showing the wounds of the Passion; this is the image of the glorification of Jesus Christ which underscores his redemptive suffering. Next, are the keystones devoted to the Joys of Mary, with the Annunciation and the Nativity, which appear in the next two bays in the choir. Given the stylistic unity of these sculptural elements, their crafting has been dated from between 1340 and 1348 and is associated with the sculptor of Elisenda de Montcada's tomb (Baqué 1997, pp. 77–78). This chronology once again dovetails with the governance of Francesca Saportella, the queen's niece (Español 2001, p. 349). As mentioned above, she was the abbess who commissioned Arnau Bassa to decorate the western wall, along with the monastery procurator and the queen's confessor, Ferrer Peyron (Trens 1936, pp. 23–24, doc. XXXVII, XXXVIII, pp. 172–73; Ainaud et al. 1947, vol. I, p. 47). The contract is explicit in stating the iconographic programme that the painter was to depict, which included a large rose window crowning the wall:

> 'quod ego depingam in Ecclesia dicti Monasterii Totum parietem (qui est in fine dicte ecclesie) ad corum eiusdem ubi sorores dicti Monasterii dicunt horas in qua pintura faciam (de bonis coloribus et fines) cum asur de Alamania et Auro fino ystoriam Arboris de vida de illis mensuris (de quibus est depicta in) Ecclesia fratrum minorum Barchinone et cum tot aut tantis figuris et similibus obragiis et (ultra hoc faciam et depingam ymagines duodecim Apostolorum videlicet sex et utraque parte arboris perinserte cum (scriptis auctoriatum divine) scripture quam tenebi quelibet ymago dictorum Apostolorum eo modo quo tenent eam figure (profetarum depictorum) in ystoriis Arboris fratrum premissorum ulterius faciam seu depingam quator ystorias passionis (domini nostri Jhesu Christi) scilicet duas ex utraque parte arboris sepedicte Ceterum circum circa fenestram rotundam (que est in dicto) pariete usque ad testudinem dicte ecclesie inclusive faciam sive depingam illud obragium de figuris (de quibus domina) abatissa dicti Monasterii voluerit et etiam ipsam fenestram rotundam depingam de diversis obragiis (competentibus et bonis)' (Trens 1936, pp. 172–73)

What Bassa was to have painted—and we are not sure whether his sudden death from the Black Plague allowed him to do it—was a large fresco with the *arbor vitae*, the images of the twelve apostles and four scenes from the Passion while also presenting the lines for the glass of the rose window.[52] The ambitious set must have replicated the *arbor vitae* painted in the convent of Sant Francesc of Barcelona.[53] A few years ago, Rosa Alcoy suggested that the rose window in the chapterhouse today must have originally come from the upper choir.[54] The window depicts the Crucifixion of Christ, flanked by the Virgin and Saint John, in a style that dovetails with the Italianate painting style of the mid-1300s. This theme makes complete sense in relation to the *arbor vitae* and must have continued and culminated in the keystone of the vault, which shows the image of Christ glorified showing his wounds from the cross. The textual source of the depiction of the tree of life comes from the works of Saint Bonaventure and Ubertino of Casale, both Franciscans, and connects with the spirituality promoted by this order. In a similar vein, it is also significant that the monastery's 1364 inventory mentions: '*Ítem* unes taules en les quals es pintat l'arbra de la vida e ay encastada de la Vera Creu', '*Ítem* some altar tables on which the tree of life is painted and it is embedded in the cross' (Anzizu 1897, p. 77; Español 2013, p. 20). Was this small altarpiece used to decorate the nuns' choir, replacing Bassa's paintings that may not have been executed because of the Black Death?

The predilection for the theme of the *arbor vitae* also connects with the devotion to the Passion of Christ. The monastery of Pedralbes was consecrated on the Feast of the

Exaltation of the Holy Cross, 3 May, and the 1366 inventory records several relics of the *lignum crucis*. A magnificent, gilded silver cross with the *Vera Creu* paid for by the procurator Jaume Despujol is still conserved today.[55] Furthermore, the community possessed other Christological relics, like thorns from the crown, mentioned in 1364 and 1376, which were venerated in a reliquary in 1466.[56]

The upper choir of Pedralbes must have been presided over by an altar, for which Sister Constança Soguera offered an altarpiece in 1338. The 1364 inventory contains different paintings decorating the altar, as well as objects related to worship:

> 'Primerament una custodia d'argent daurada e esmaltada, ab diverses pedres qui est dins al cor de les dones en que te en lo Corpus Christi. *Ítem* I copa d'aur esmaltada en la qual tenen lo Corpus Christi quant les dones combreguen. *Ítem* I pali de vallut vermeyl carmasi ab ystoria de la anunciado e ab ymage de sent Johan Babtista e de Senta Catharina sembrat d'esteles d'aur ab perles lo qual serveix al altar de les dones. *Ítem* una cortina blandía qui servex de corema en l'altar del chor de les dones. *Ítem* II canalobres de ferre grans qui estan en lo chor de les dones devant de lur altar. *Ítem* III saltiris de cor. *Ítem* I libre per la sacra de las donas. *Ítem* II canalobres de fust obrats daur qui servexen al cor'
>
> 'Firstly a monstrance of gilded and enamelled silver, with several stones that is inside the women's choir in which they have the Corpus Christi. *Ítem* I gilded and enamelled cup in which they have the Corpus Christi when the women receive communion. *Ítem* I is a pallium of crimson red velvet with the story of the Annunciation and with the image of St. John the Baptist and St. Catherine sown with golden sparkles with pearls that serves on the altar of the women. *Ítem* I a white curtain that serves in Lent on the altar of the women's choir. *Ítem* II large iron candlesticks that are in the women's choir in front of the altar. *Ítem* III choir psalteries. *Ítem* I book for the women's *sacra*. *Ítem* II gilded wooden candlesticks that serve in the choir [57]

The donations by the choir from the Clarissans themselves continued: in 1376, the abbess Sibil·la de Caixans (1364–1376) donated a frontal for the altar table made of silk, gold and stones (Fita 1896, p. 151; Anzizu 1897, p. 92; Castro 1968, p. 427; Castellano 1998, p. 222; Carbonell et al. 2005, p. 25), and Sister Francesca Canellas († 1381) offered a new silk frontal (Castellano 1998, pp. 22, 364–65; Carbonell et al. 2005, p. 25). Therefore, in the late fourteenth century the choir altar was equipped with an altarpiece and several frontals for the altar table which changed according to the liturgical calendar. Above or in front of the altar was a light fixture, which consisted of two iron candelabra and two gilded wooden ones. A white curtain was used to cover the altarpiece during Lent, as required. In front of the choir altar, the nuns adored the Corpus Christi, which was displayed in the gilded enamelled silver monstrance which featured first in the inventory of Sibil·la de Caixans (Anzizu 1897, p. 76; Castellano 1998, p. 232). Following the example of their founder, the Clarissans expressed a profound devotion to the eucharist, which was manifested, for example, in the adoration of the Corpus Christi and the official celebration of its feast day, accompanied with a procession within the claustration.[58] It should come as no surprise, as Meseguer has underscored, that the Clarissans in Pedralbes adored the eucharist in the choir even before that privileged was sanctioned by Pope Clement VII (1378–1394) (Meseguer 1980, pp. 116–17; Castellano 1998, pp. 230–35). We do not know whether the references to the candle, which was supposed to be lit before the Corpus Christi allude to the choir altar, as they seem to, given that there is no proof of an altar just for this invocation, while we do know that a monstrance with the Corpus Christi tended to be displayed on the choir altar. This conjunction aligns with the information we have from several nuns; for example, Margarita Olivera donated 27 *sous* and 8 *diners* for a candle before the Corpus Christi and another for the Virgin (Anzizu 1897, pp. 92–93; Castro 1968, p. 411; Castellano 1998, p. 232), and, in 1397, Margarita Nágera offered 14 *sous* for the candle for the Corpus Christi (Castro 1968, p. 406; Sanjust 2010, p. 41).

What was the altarpiece of the fourteenth-century choir like? Was it also devoted to the Virgin? We cannot answer this question with complete certainty, but it is easy to assume that it was, given the Marian devotion of the new altarpiece that abbess Margarita de Montcada hired the woodworker Pere Puig to make in 1427. This piece had a central tabernacle which housed a sculpture-in-the-round of the Virgin, following a drawing made by Bernat Martorell.[59] In 1439, the charters were signed in which the abbess, along with the nuns Violant de Centelles, Isabel de Corbera and Englantina de Caixans, commissioned Martorell himself, by then a reputed artist, to paint the altarpiece, which was supposed to be finished in 1442 (Fita 1896, p. 151; Anzizu 1897, p. 105; B. Bassegoda 1928, p. 19; Ruiz Quesada 2010, p. 230; Sanjust 2010, pp. 216–21, 313, 393). The programme stipulated consisted of six scenes from the Passion (Last Supper, Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Prison, Flagellation, The Way to Calvary, and the Descent from the Cross) on the bench, the joys of the Virgin Mary (Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost and the Assumption of Mary) on the six side compartments flanking the central figure of Mary and the characteristic Crucifixion on the upper panel, while the figures of the saints—Saint Francis, Saint Clare, Saint John the Baptist and Saint Lawrence—occupied the intermediate spaces. The dust cover was supposed to bear the abbess's arms and those of any Clarissans who wished (Ruiz Quesada 2010, p. 230; Sanjust 2010, p. 393). Once again, the iconographic programme combined Marian and Christological themes that contrasted the Joys of Mary with the Passion of Christ; although this iconography is characteristic of Catalan Gothic painting, it fits in perfectly with Franciscan spirituality and is echoed in the main altar of the church, made by Jaume and Pere Serra between 1368 and 1370, and the famous murals in the Saint Michael chapel of the cloister which Saportella commissioned from Ferrer Bassa (1343–1346) (Fita 1896, p. 146; Madurell 1952, doc. 435, pp. 51–53).

In 1438, the beneficiary Joan Verdaguer paid for the lantern that was lit before the Virgin of the Choir on Saturdays and feast days, specifically with six candles (Sanjust 2010, p. 396, citing Anzizu 1899, p. 299). The information provided by Anzizu is scant and we do not know the whereabouts of this Marian image. Was it the one that presided over the choir altarpiece painted by Martorell, or was it a second freestanding image located at some place in the choir? The 1366 inventory contains red checkered curtains for the Virgin, without stating to which image they were related. According to this same nun, in 1783, decorations were made for the curtains of Our Lady of the Choir. The 1364 inventory includes different objects commonly found among Marian goods but without indicating which Marian image they were for, so we cannot discard the possibility that they were for the Virgin of the Choir, as in Sant Antoni i Santa Clara (Crispí and Jornet 2021, pp. 470–82).

> 'Ítem I vel que serveix al peu de la ymage dona senta María senbrat de flors de fuyla d' aur e de perles; Ítem II cabayeres la una de canons e de perles e l'altre de fil d' aur qui serveixen a la ymage de madona Senta Maria; Ítem IIII corones de fuyla d'aur ab perles e ab pedres les II per al infant Jesucrist e les altres II per a la sua mara; Ítem una noscha ab pedres diverses e ab perles; Ítem unes vestadures de vallut blau sembrades d'obres d¡argent per a la ymage de madona Senta Maria e de son fill. Ítem unes vestadures de drap daur ab una orla de pedres y de perles; Ítem unes vestadures de taffatá vermeyl ab esteles de fuyla daur; Ítem I mantell de drap daur e altra de taffatá blau ab orla d'aur e altre de taffatá vert. Ítem II mantells de drap daur per ales dites ymages *modici valoris*'

> 'Ítem I veil that serves at the foot of the image of Saint Mary, all sewn with gold leaf flowers and pearls; Ítem II (. . .) (*cabayeres*),[60] one of (. . .) and pearls and the other of gold thread that serve the image of the Virgin Mary; Ítem IIII crowns of gold leaf with pearls and stones, the II for the Child Jesus Christ and the other II for his mother; Ítem a brooch with various stones and pearls; Ítem some vestments of blue velvet sown with silver for the image of the Virgin Mary and her son; Ítem some vestments of gold cloth with a border of stones and pearls. Ítem some vestments of red taffatan and with gold leaf stars; Ítem I mantle of gold cloth and

another of blue taffatan with a gold border and another of green taffeta; *Ítem* II mantles of gold cloth for the said images *modici valoris*' (Anzizu 1897, p. 79)

The 1466 inventory records three other dresses for the Virgin in different colours and fabrics that stand out for their sumptuousness.[61] Anzizu questioned whether these goods were meant for the Marian image venerated in the choir until the nineteenth century, referring to a sculpture that measured 1.12 cm (Anzizu 1897, p. 79). The following three fourteenth-century alabaster sculptures of the Virgin are conserved in the monastery: the one that currently presides over the church's presbyter which, according to J. Ainaud, used to be venerated in the lower choir and was the one that presided over Martorell's altarpiece (Ainaud et al. 1947, vol. I: pp. 132–52 and vol. II, fig. 761–856, vol. I, p. 146, vol. II: photo 825), the image in the chapterhouse (Crispí 1997, pp. 107–26) and a Virgin that belongs to the community, whose facture has been associated with the sculptor who made Elisenda de Montcada's tomb.[62] The pieces described in the inventory, especially the two wigs, the crowns and the *nosca*, hint at the Clarissans dressing a Marian image.

At this point we must also mention the three figures that compose a fourteenth-century nativity scene conserved in Pedralbes, which may have been the object of devotion by the nuns in the upper choir, along with the two wax angels documented in 1466.[63]

## 6. Final Remarks

Unfortunately, the destruction of a large number of mediaeval female monasteries in much of Western Europe and the loss of their archives pose a significant obstacle to their analysis. As we have seen, numerous studies in recent years have contributed to a deeper understanding of the location, furnishings and decoration of women's monastic choirs, and, thus, of the functional and significant richness of these spaces. However, relevant aspects such as their liturgical and devotional function, the nature of the religious practices that took place in them, and the strict or lax manner in which the nuns lived in the cloister are still the subject of strong critical review.

This article aims to contribute to this discussion on the basis of the privileged documentation provided by the archives of the three communities studied. In all three cases, they are upper choirs located on the far western side of the nave. Chronologically, the oldest one is Sant Pere de les Puel·les, but we do not know whether this area belonged to the church consecrated in 1147 or whether it dates from a subsequent reform. Regardless, by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the nuns' choir was an upper space open to the nave and its main altar which could be accessed from the upper storey of the cloister. One century later, Sant Antoni i Santa Clara was built once again equipped with an upper choir. This is a space that has a forerunner in Barcelona in the Sant Pere de les Puel·les monastery, but it has no parallel around this time at the site where the order was founded given that neither San Damiano or Santa Chiara d'Assisi had upper areas.[64] When, in 1326–1327, the building of Santa Maria de Pedralbes was erected ex novo and in a fully Gothic architectural language, the model chosen was the one offered by Sant Antoni and Santa Clara in Barcelona, the monastery from which the founding community had started, placing the choir above the last sections of the nave. Thus, while historiography has highlighted the variety of choir locations in women's monasteries in Italy, Germany and Castile (Untermann 2015, pp. 327–53; Pérez Vidal 2022, p. 43), in Barcelona the formula of the high choir at the end of the nave seems to have become the most common typology. Although we cannot say to what extent this layout generated a standardised model that was systematically applied in other monastic and conventual churches of female orders,[65] we do know that the monastery of Santa Maria de Jonqueres, built between 1293 and 1448, in Barcelona, had a choir loft at the end of the single nave.[66]

A more controversial issue is the functionality of the choral enclosure as a liturgical space. All three choirs studied had altars; the one in Sant Pere was devoted to Saint Agnes and Saint Scholastica, the one in Santa Clara to the Virgin (at least in the sixteenth century) and the one in Pedralbes was probably Marian. In two of the cases, Sant Pere and Sant Antoni i Santa Clara, we are certain that mass was held there for the nuns, at least at certain

periods or feasts of the liturgical year and, therefore, the altar had the required liturgical goods. We cannot say the same for Pedralbes; although the reference to its altar in the celebration of the investiture of Jaume March as a knight indicates that it had one, and the inventories seem to corroborate this. We also have another reference that confirms the existence of altars in a choir of another female community, as follows: in 1450, the abbess and several nuns of the Cistercian monastery of Santa Maria de Valldonzella in Barcelona founded a benefice in the altar of the choir.[67] In addition to the celebration of the Eucharist, we can be certain that all three female communities worshipped the Holy Sacrament in a monstrance displayed on the choir altar. A number of studies have highlighted the development of devotion to the Eucharist in women's convents. This devotion was manifested not only in the drawing aside of the curtain at the moment of the *elevatio* but also in the veneration of the Corpus Domini itself on the choir altar. A more detailed study of the archives, at least the Catalan documentation, could provide valuable information for understanding the extent of these practices and the liturgical dimension of the nuns' choir, a dimension that, on the basis of documentary information, seems incontrovertible right now (Bynum 1984, pp. 179–214; Muschiol 2008, pp. 191–206; Pérez Vidal 2016).

The documentary evidence of the liturgical use of the choir, particularly the celebration of mass, leads us to question the strict compliance with the claustration prescribed by the Rules and constitutions. They highlighted the fact that the priest could exceptionally enter the cloistered area, and when this happened the presbyter had to be accompanied by two elderly clergymen. Recently, Caroline Bruzelius has suggested that the geographical distance from Rome or Avignon may have been a relevant factor in the relaxation of the regulations prescribed by the monastic rules in some areas such as Castile (Bruzelius 2022, p. 28). Perhaps this was also the case in the Crown of Aragon, where at the end of the 14th century King Martin the Human intervened directly to complete a series of measures that sought to strengthen the strict closure in Pedralbes. A century later, the Catholic Kings promoted a much more in-depth reform.

The punctual celebration of Mass, the veneration of the Blessed Sacrament and the administration of the viaticum justified the existence of a specific liturgical trousseau for the choir. While in Les Puel·les there is evidence of the existence of two sacristies, the richest of which was that of the nuns, the inventories of the two convents of the Poor Clares show the existence of a wide variety of liturgical linen and sacred vessels for specific use in the choir. These facts show the express will of the three communities to have their own complete and sumptuous trousseau, which they administered and for which the sacristans were directly responsible.

The common use of expressions like *sgleya dintra* and *sgleya de fora*, and, even more significantly, *altar nostro* or *nostro altar* and *altar de fora*, as documented by Sant Antoni and Santa Clara, should come as no surprise. These terms are eloquent expressions of the mental and also physical and spatial duality caused by the choir being between the nuns' interior, private space and the exterior church—the *sgleya de fora*—open to the parishioners (Jornet 2014, pp. 277–308; Crispí and Jornet 2021). The language used reveals the status of that choir not so much as a space in addition to or instead of the church but as a space with an entity; hence, the nuns' use of possessive adjectives, such as *nostro altar*, terms that only emphasise the close affective and mental bond with the space. The dimension and connotations that these expressions reflect are directly related to the significance and functions that the choir played and which, according to the nuns, was equivalent and even superior to the church outside. Choir and exterior church, *sgleya dintra* and *sgleya de fora*, were two spaces delimited by clear physical and mental barriers, which housed joint, regular liturgical practices, while in others they gave rise to their own devotional rites and practices. When they took place in the choir, involved a much more intense and personalised personal, sensorial and affective relationship, whether it was through the leading role played by the nuns in the adornment and dressing of the altar and the

images, or, on the other hand, in the more experiential and persuasive aspects involved in communal or personal prayer or the veneration of the exposed Blessed Sacrament.[68]

In fact, the choir was the prescribed space for the community to pray the divine office, but it was also the site for the nuns' personal prayer. For this reason, the choir was not a bare, neutral space. The documentation analysed shows how the nuns used visual and sensory resources that impacted the heart and intellect, generating a more intimate, personal and emotional devotion that helped them to experience the *imitatio Christi* promoted by the mendicant orders and accentuated by the postulates of the *Devotio moderna*. This is verified by the three images of the Virgin of the Choir that the nuns dressed and decorated, matching this practice with the colours of the feast day or the liturgical season. The descriptions of the sumptuousness and variety of the Marian garments and jewels in the sacristy inventories enable an idea of what it meant for them to dress the Virgin, as follows: touching and viewing these goods were sensory experiences and a way of expression Marian devotion, as well as a way to feel her maternal protection and ask for her intercession. It was a personal experience, as was viewing the scenes on the altarpieces and frontals, the mural paintings and stained-glass windows.

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## Notes

1 Montserrat, Arxiu del monestir de Sant Benet de Montserrat, Monestir de Santa Clara de Barcelona, *Inventari de sagristia* 1437, vol. 31, no. 8, pp. 2–3 (hereinafter AMSBM, MSCB, IS and for *inventaris de convent*: AMSBM, MSCB, IC). A paginated transcript of inventories is used; we will use p. instead of fol. for the inventories. All the textual citations respect the original language of the document, which is in mediaeval Catalan. The translation into contemporary English has been introduced to make the original text in mediaeval Catalan understandable, but in the translated version words of unknown or ambiguous meaning in mediaeval Catalan have been omitted or written in cursiva.

2 Barcelona, Arxiu del monestir de Sant Pere de les Puel·les, Monestir de Sant Pere de les Puel·les, *Llibre d'abadesses* 1448–1449, no. 100, fol. 24r (hereinafter AMSPP, MSPP, LA).

3 This article was developed within the framework of the Monastic Landscapes. Representations and Virtualisations of Medieval Spiritual and Material Realities in the Western Mediterranean (6th–16th centuries). PI: Marta Sancho and Núria Jornet (Universitat de Barcelona). Project financed by Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades. Gobierno de España (2019–2022). Concession code: PG2018-095350-B-100. Dates: 2019–2022.I would like to thank Irene Brugués, Technical Director and Archivist of ACUB, Àmbit Cultural de Benedictines de Catalunya, for the facilities she has offered me to consult the documentation of the monasteries of Sant Pere de les Puel·les and Sant Antoni i Santa Clara, as well as for her always wise guidance. I would also like to express my gratitude to Anna Castellano and Carme Aixelà, Director and Head of Collections at the Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Pedralbes, for allowing me to consult various materials and documentation on this relevant institution.

4 In 1513, the community became subject to the Benedictine rule, a decision that was provoked by the reform of the Clarissan order that the community did not want to accept (Azcona 1968, pp. 78–134; Jornet 2012, pp. 171–89).

5 AMSPP, MSPP, *Llibre de la visita de 1585 a l'església monàstica i parroquial de Sant Pere de les Puelles* (Barcelona) (hereinafter AMSPP, MSPP, LV 1585).

6 The archive preserves 16 inventories (6 from the convent and 10 from the sacristy). The modern documentation consulted included AMSBM, MSCB, Sebastià Roger, *Llibre de carrechs i officis del present monestir de S.Clara de Barcelona y de les obligacions de aquells* 1598 (hereinafter AMSBM, MSCB, *Llibre de carrechs*), *Llibre de coses dignes de memòria del monestir de Santa Clara* and *Llibre en lo qual estan designats i kalendats los actes i scriptures dels beneficis instituits del monestir de Santa Clara de Barcelona*, 1598 (hereinafter AMSBM, MSCB, *Llibre de beneficis*).

7 For an overview of the claustration of female convents see the following, among others: (Bruzelius 1992, pp. 83–91; 1996, pp. 53–74; Gardner 1995, pp. 29–56; Jäggi 2001, pp. 79–93; Volti 2007, pp. 79–86; Hamburger and Marti 2008; Jäggi and Lobbedey 2008, pp. 109–31; Guazzini 2012, pp. 5–21; Flora 2014, pp. 63–75; Garí 2014, pp. 71–95; Mecham 2014; Beckers 2015, pp. 107–17; Untermann 2015, pp. 327–53; Pérez Vidal 2016, pp. 35–47; 2020, pp. 75–116; Morvan 2022) with important contributions of Valeria Danesi, Giulia Rossi Vairo and particularly: (Pérez Vidal 2022, pp. 227–58; Volti 2022, pp. 301–16). An excellent summary of the open questions surrounding monastic choirs is the text by Caroline Bruzelius: Introduction" in Morvan (2022, pp. 1–14). We cannot gather here all the bibliography published on monastic or cathedral choirs. In the case of Spanish peninsular kingdoms,

we can refer to the following works, among others, by Eduardo Carrero (2008a, 2008b, 2018a, 2018b); (Carrero and Fernández 2020) and J. Rivas Carmona (2010).

8 Monstrance adoration is documented at the altar of various female choirs in German communities: (Jäggi 2001, p. 85; Hamburger et al. 2008, pp. 73–74, 98; Muschiol 2008, pp. 198–99; Jäggi and Lobbedey 2008, pp. 109–31, p. 121, 126; Pérez Vidal 2016, pp. 43–44; 2022, p. 24).

9 Jäggi studies the cases of several female mendicant convents equipped with two choirs, one with a liturgical function located near the main altar and another located at the foot of the nave for devotional practices. In the female Dominican nunnery of Colmar, the priest entered in the enclosure to celebrate the mass on the solemnities (Jäggi and Lobbedey 2008, p. 126). On the contrary, Volti claims that the choirs of female mendicant communities had no liturgical function (Volti 2005, pp. 245–49, on p. 247).

10 It is possible that the southern nave parallel to the western arm of the Greek cross and the dome that covers the transept also date from the late mediaeval period (Crispí 2020, pp. 99–101 and Crispí forthcoming).

11 Miquel Garriga i Roca (1808–1888) was the municipal architect of Barcelona and published a large number of blueprints of the city between 1859 and 1862, which provide a detailed description of the urban layout of the city before the destruction or disappearance of numerous convents and monasteries. Ajuntament de Barcelona, Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona (AHCB 2024): *Els quarterons Garriga i Roca. Barcelona darrera mirada. Una ciutat de mitjan segle XIX a punt de canviar per sempre*, quarteró 40. Available online: <https://darreramirada.ajuntament.barcelona.cat/#mapa> (accessed on 1 June 2024). Another engraving: see (Patxot 1840). This layout has also been published by Francesc Carreras Candi et al. (Carreras Candi et al. 1908–1918, vol. 4, pp. 850–51).

12 'Pujaren ab dita profeso al cor per la scala gran la qual estave tota entelada y cuberta de seda y molt enrimada (. . .) hoiren la Misa Mayor de pontifical la cual digue lo President de la (. . .) de Sant Benet, en la capella de Sant Pere, enfront del cor de dites religioses' (AMSPP, MSPP, *Visita de Felip III i Margarita de Austria*, 1599, fol. 1r and Paulí 1945, pp. 87–88).

13 A new repair was made in 1446 when the carpenter Joan Orriols fixed a window (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1446–1447, no. 96, fol. 55v).

14 Perhaps some of these windows were closed with doors, given that they are also mentioned in the documentation from 1446–1447 (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, no. 95, fol. 83r).

15 (Morales 2007, p. 127; Zaragoza 2017, p. 172) One of the consequences of this rebellion was the deposition of the abbess Constança de Peguera in 1494.

16 New measures were promoted by the apostolic reformer and abbot of Montserrat, García Jiménez de Cisneros, which took specific shape in the provincial chapter of 1506 with the promulgation of fifteen constitutions aimed at renewing community life, separation from the world and poverty (Zaragoza 2017, pp. 178–79). A new attempt at reform was encouraged by Philip II in 1556 and continued throughout the second half of the century, culminating in the Constitutions approved by the Cloistered Congregation on 3 May 1615 (Zaragoza 1976, p. 177).

17 'Dit dia proseguint dita visita la H y molt Hnt sen(y)ora Abbadesa en companyia de la sen(y)ora sacristana se conferi a la capella o altar del benaurat St Agnès y sancta Escolastic construit en lo cor del present monastir enlo qual per obseruancia de la clausura no ha volgut acistent' (AMSPP, MSPP, LV 1585, fol. 40).

18 This is only a partial description because the record refers to a previous visit in 1574 that has not been preserved, when a more exhaustive record of this altar had been made (AMSPP, MSPP, LV 1585, fol. 40r–40v). The titular saints of the altar are models of holiness for the Benedictines. Saint Agnes was a Roman martyr who died during Diocletian's empire, according to tradition, for defending her chastity. Saint Scholastica (480–547), the sister of Saint Benedict of Nursia, is considered the inspiration and patron of Benedictine nuns.

19 Like the other priests that benefited from the church, they depended on the abbess who had full jurisdiction by an ancient papal decision. The beneficiary of Saint Agnes and Saint Scholastica received an annual stipend of 24 *sous* and 10 *diners* in two payments made twice a year (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1467–1468, no. 128, fol. 47r, and 1442–1443, no. 92, fol. 45r).

20 Paid to the carpenter 40 sous (AMSPP, MSPP, LA, 1448–1449, no. 100, fol. 24r; 1448–1449, no. 100, fol. 24r and 1481–1482, no. 153, fol. 104v).

21 The presence of images—of the Virgin Mary, Crucifixes or sculptural ensembles—and miraculous images in the choir is widely documented in the choirs of women's monasteries. See the following, among others: (Bynum 2008, pp. 172–90; 2020a, pp. 97–128; 2020b, pp. 59–96; Hamburger et al. 2008, pp. 48–55, 69; Hamburger and Suckale 2008, pp. 89, 97–103; Jäggi 2014, pp. 241–76).

22 The monastery was practically destroyed during the siege on the flank of the Sant Daniel gate on 14 August 1714. The nuns had left the monastery a year before, moving to the Convento de la Enseñanza (Ainaud et al. 1947, vol. 1, pp. 173–75; Figuerola 2003, p. 236; Jornet 2007, pp. 74, 81).

23 A good example of this is the bull of Innocent IV dated 2 June 1244 granting the faithful of the province of Tarragona 20 days of indulgence for the alms they gave to the monastery (Fita 1895, doc. 10, p. 288), which was repeated in 1247 (Fita 1895, doc. 25 and 27, pp. 302, 304). Likewise, in 1247, the Bishop of Vic granted 40 days of indulgences for the same reason (Jornet 2007, pp. 93, 123), and this privilege recurred in 1254 (Jornet 2007, p. 93).

24 Examples include Bernat and Arnau de Pons in 1250 and 1251 (Jornet 2007, p. 129).

[25] (Jornet 2007, p. 94) On the contrary, J. Ainaud et al. point to an earlier date, 1249, while they date the beginning of the cloister from 1257 (Ainaud et al. 1947, pp. 173–75), quoted by Jornet (2007, p. 92).

[26] Founded by Ermessenda d'Espiells (Jornet 2007, pp. 94, 132), along with another benefice in honour of San Antonio promoted by Bernat Marquet in 1257 (Jornet 2007, p. 206).

[27] Founded by Guillem de Vida, which involved the construction of the altar (Jornet 2007, pp. 128, 131).

[28] Founded by Bernat Cantullí in 1280 (AMSBM, MSCB, *Llibre de beneficis*).

[29] With a benefice founded by Pere de Santcliment in 1285 (AMSBM, MSCB, *Llibre de beneficis*).

[30] (Jornet 2007, p. 94) In 1255, Alejandro IV allowed access to the monastery's enclosed spaces to a worker accompanied whenever necessary, which suggests that the construction of the monastery was advancing towards the inner quarters (Fita 1895, doc. 31, p. 307; Jornet 2007, pp. 83, 168).

[31] Gerarda de Riquer entered the monastery on that date, probably already a widow because she mentioned her deceased son and her daughter-in-law Margarita, who was also a nun at Sant Antoni (Jornet 2007, pp. 128, 134, 178).

[32] AMSBM, MSCB, IC, 1358, plec 813, p. 3v. This is also recognised in (Ainaud et al. 1947, p. 174).

[33] The visit began with a mass after which 'acabada (la misa) baxarem en lo capítol' (AMSBM, MSCB, 1527 visit, fol. 72v).

[34] All these records correspond to the 1437 sacristy inventory made by the sacristan Elionor de Rajadell. She was part of an omnipresent family line found among the nuns of the monastery in the late Middle Ages. Three other abbesses also bear the same surname: Serena de Rajadell (1445–1459), Elionor de Rajadell (1459–1463) and Margarida de Rajadell (1493–1503).

[35] 'Ítem una capsa en la qual a IIII tovallolas, les dues son de seda ab listes totas d'or ab flocadura blancha e vermela per los caps, les quals servexen de dins [quant] l'altar nostro quant hi sta la orla', '*Ítem* a box in which there are III towels, two are silk with stripes all of gold with white and red flocking on the heads, which are used inside [when] our altar when the frame is' (AMSCB, MSCB, IS, 1437, p. 2v).

[36] C. Bruzelius has suggested that the changes in the location of the choir in Santa Chiara in Naples, in relation to Santa Chiara d'Asisi and Santa Maria Donnaregina in Naples, is related to the possibility of venerating Corpus Christi and viewing the elevation of the Host at the moment of consecration (Bruzelius 1992, 1996, 2005).

[37] AMSCB, MSCB, *Llibre de càrrecs*, fol. 44. For the functions of the sexton: (Jornet 2014, pp. 282–84).

[38] AMSBM, MSCB, *Llibre de sagristia*, 1393 and 1457–1464 (hereinafter AMSBM, MSCB, LS). Some of the books containing the sacristy accounts are not paginated.

[39] The altar had a benefice instituted by Saura de Badós in 1316, by the procurator and beneficiary of the community, Ermengol Solà, who also seems to have founded a chaplaincy (1321), and the infanta Blanca de Sicília (between 1375 and 1378). This is when María, widow of Berenguer de Vic, donated a cloth for her funeral, which she wished to be held at the Santa María altar in the monastery (Jornet 2007, pp. 133–84, 232; Garí 2020, p. 90). We do not know the original location of the altar in the late mediaeval centuries, but in the drawing by Joan Sentís it occupies the last chapel of the epistle, at the foot of the nave, when it was dedicated to Mare de Déu dels Esclaus.

[40] The cabinet contained 'la crisma ab I capsa de vori e tot so qui hobs hi és' (AMSCB, MSCB, IC, 1399, plec 813, no. 18, p. 13).

[41] AMSCB, MSCB, IS, 1437, vol. 31, no. 8, p. 10v and 'II becins de lautó qui servexan a la unció' (AMSCB, MSCB, IC, 1399, plec 813, no. 18, p. 13r).

[42] The bibliography on the monastery of Santa María de Pedralbes is extensive. The studies used in this paper are the following: (Mestres 1882, pp. 18–30; Anzizu 1897; Duran i Sanpere 1921; B. Bassegoda 1922; Escudero 1988; Castellano 1996, 1998; Balasch and Español 1997; Sanjust 2009, 2010; Español 2013, pp. 9–35).

[43] The monastery is located on the slope of Sant Pere Màrtir hill in the southern foothills of the Serra de Collserola, so the buildings were constructed on three stepped terraces that served as the foundation of the temple. While the church rests on the middle terrace, the last two sections of the upper choir rest directly on the upper embankment (Escudero 1988, p. 8; Castellano 2014, 103–139, on p. 109). On the construction of the Pedralbes monastery: (Mestres 1882, pp. 18–35; Duran i Sanpere 1921, pp. 12–15; B. Bassegoda 1922, pp. 28–32; Ainaud et al. 1947, vol. I, pp. 132–52, vol. II: fig. 761–856; Escudero 1988, pp. 8–14; Ortoll 1997, pp. 59–105; Beseran et al. 2002, pp. 192–200; Sanjust 2010, pp. 87–320; Castellano 2011, pp. 11–21; Español 2013). The unity of the construction process has been sustained by Beseran et al. (2002) and Español (2013, pp. 17–18).

[44] Ortoll (1997, p. 59) and Beseran et al. (2002, p. 199) also invoke the model of Santa Chiara in Naples for the solution of the lower choir, enclosed by a wall with two latticed windows. Regarding this church, see the following, among others: (Elliott and Ward 2004).

[45] The Second Franciscan order prescribed a life of strict claustration, which constituted the defining features of the spirituality of Saint Clare along with personal and community poverty. In fact, in the Rule she wrote at the end of her life, approved by Innocent IV in 1253, the saint calls the community the Order of the Poor Clares. In the third chapter, she prescribes the way the nuns should pray the divine office in the choir (Clara d'Assís 2004, p. 30).

[46] The text of the Rule is written in such a way that it points out that the choir is on the same level as the church, so that the priest, approaching the altar, could introduce the chalice through the door and give communion to nuns.

47 Thus, for example, in 1363, the queen, already elderly and affected by aches, received a privilege from the cardinal protector Talayrandus to open a door that connected the palace with the cloister, possibly near the nuns' bedroom (Anzizu 1897, pp. 65–66; Escudero 1988, p. 19; Castellano 2014, p. 112; Sanjust 2010, p. 139).

48 Not unrelated to this is the fact that Elisenda, herself, resided in Pedralbes and one of Jaume March's daughters, Isabel, had professed in the monastery a year earlier at the age of nine, later becoming abbess between 1409 and 1411. The event is first recorded in the monastery's necrology (Castro 1968, p. 398) and has been mentioned by most authors who have studied the monastery.

49 The queen issued four *Ordinances* in which she specified the endowment of the monastery and established certain aspects of convent life. For their content see the following: (Castellano 1998, pp. 52–77).

50 (Español 2001, p. 347). See the report on this visit made by Josep Puiggarí (1879, pp. 170–87).

51 (Español 2001, pp. 343–46; 2013, p. 20). The monastery houses a double tomb of the queen, one in the cloister, where the queen wears the Franciscan habit, and another in the presbytery of the temple, where Elisenda holds royal attributes. Regarding the authorship of Elisenda de Montcada's tomb, see the following, among others: (Beseran 1991, pp. 215–45; Español 2013, p. 32).

52 Sanjust also adds the Virgin's Joys, as Anzizy notes in the *Índex* (Sanjust 2010, pp. 217, 392). About the *arbor vitae* of Pedralbes, see the following, among others: (J. Bassegoda 1973; J. Sureda 1981, pp. 5–32; Alcoy 2005, p. 173; Beseran 2010, p. 72; Simbeni 2011, pp. 113–41; Español 2013).

53 For this monastery see the following: (Webster 1981, pp. 223–56; 2000, pp. 31–32; Giné i Torres 1988, pp. 221–41).

54 (Alcoy 2003, pp. 181–83) A theory endorsed by Flavia Bazzocchi (2011, pp. 25–37). See the following also: (Ainaud 1997; Beseran 2010, pp. 71–80; Castellano 2011, pp. 11–21). The current rose window is the result of reforms carried out since 1505, commissioned by Maria de Aragón to Gil Fontanet (Anzizu 1897, p. 132; Duran i Sanpere 1921, p. 15; Ainaud 1997, pp. 27, 321–27; Sanjust 2010, pp. 237, 314; Castellano 2011, p. 19).

55 The assets registered in 1364 by Sibil·la de Queixans include: 'Ítem un reliquier de lata dargent daurada ab diverses images en la qual ha encastada de la vera creu e ab diverses pedres fines e perles grosses en que están diverses ossos de sants e stan cuberts ab lates de crestayl (. . .), Ítem una Creu dargent daurada e esmaltada ab pedres fines e ab pedes groases en la qual ha encastada de la vera Creu (. . .), Ítem una Creu d'argent daurada ab pedres fines e ab perles grosses en que ha de la vera Creu', '*Ítem* a reliquary of silver gilt tin with several images in which is embedded the true cross and with several fine stones and large pearls in which are various bones of saints and are covered with cans of glass (. . .), *Ítem* a Cross of silver gilt and enamelled with fine stones and with coarse stones in which is embedded the true Cross (. . .), *Ítem* a Cross of silver gilt with fine stones and with large pearls in which the true Cross is embedded (. . .), *Ítem* a Cross of silver gilt with fine stones and with large pearls in which must the true Cross' (Anzizu 1897, pp. 76–77). About the reliquary cross, see the following: (Anzizu 1897, p. 35; Fita 1896, pp. 144–45). In a recent study, Núria de Dalmases suggested that the cross is the result of assembling two different pieces, while the base, where Jaume Despujol's arms appear, could be from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth centuries, the reliquary cross would date from 1340–1350 (Dalmases 2005, cat. 5, pp. 68–69).

56 For the thorns mentioned in the inventories of 1364 and 1376, see the following: (Anzizu 1897, pp. 77, 86). The reliquary was pedunculated with two thorns inside a glass case, flanked by two angels, whose foot bore two enamels decorated with pearls (AMSMP, *Inventari de béns mobles continguts en les cases del carrer Santa Anna de Barcelona, propietat del Monestir de Pedralbes*, 1466).

57 Here, only the goods that are specified to be used in the choir are listed but other listed objects may have also been used for this purpose.

58 In this festival, by privilege granted by the Minister General of the Lord, Fra Àngel de Spoleto, twenty friars from convents of Barcelona could enter the cloister to participate in the solemn process (Anzizu 1897, p. 75; Meseguer 1980, pp. 118–19; Castellano 1998, p. 232).

59 The carpentry of the altarpiece cost 63 *lliures* and 15 *sous* and was completed in 1430. It is the earliest surviving reference to a work by Bernat Martorell (Ruiz Quesada 2010, pp. 228–46; Sanjust 2010, p. 393).

60 The term *cabellera* is not clear, but it must have been a kind of wig used to enrich the images of the Virgin. It is documented in numerous inventories of monasteries and parish churches in the late Middle Ages and early Modern Age.

61 They invented brocade dresses adorned with ermine for the Virgin and the Child, with a crimson velvet cloth for Mary's feet, other dresses of red embroidered velvet and others of purple.

62 This alabaster sculpture measures 62 cm (Beseran 2001, cat. 27, pp. 116–17; Barrachina 2005, cat. 2, pp. 60–61).

63 (Español 1992, cat. 3.38, pp. 301–3; Terés 2005, cat. 4, pp. 65–67). For the wax angels see: (Sanjust 2010, p. 71).

64 But the Dominican monastery of Santa Margarita in Budapest, finished in 1252 (quoted by Pérez Vidal 2022, p. 27), and the Poor Clare monastery of Santa Maria Donnaregina in Naples had a high choir at the end of the nave. Mercedes Pérez Vidal, following W. Schenkluhn, points out that the choir lofts at the beginning of the nave of the monastic church had their emergence in the 11th and 12th centuries, being later adopted by the Cistercian order in Germany and later by the Franciscans and Dominicans (Pérez Vidal 2022, p. 26).

[65] The history of the women's orders in Barcelona is, to a large extent, still under construction due to the almost complete loss of the original factories, the difficulty of getting to know the mediaeval buildings because of the successive relocations, reconstructions and restorations that these communities underwent and, as a consequence, the loss of a large part of their documentary collection.

[66] The church, begun around 1293 when the community of the military order of Saint James moved to Barcelona, was consecrated in 1448. On the location of the choir, see the following: (Garriga Roca 1899, pp. 19–20; Costa 1973, p. 97 (points to a double choir, high and low); Figuerola 2003, p. 231).

[67] (Madurell 1976, p. 98) As early as 1446, a choir stalls were built and the choir was enlarged (Paulí 1972, p. 42, quoted by Madurell 1976, p. 42). Also, in 1450, the Virgin of the Choir, a Byzantine-style icon attributed to the work of Saint Luke, is mentioned for the first time. In another Cistercian Catalan nunnery, the prioress, Berenguera d'Anglesola i Pinós, founded a chapel consecrated to Corpus Christi in the choir of the nuns, with an altar and its altarpiece (Pérez Vidal 2016, p. 36).

[68] It is necessary to emphasise here that the inventories, as a type of document, undergo an evolution that is embodied in the gradual systematisation of their structure, which reflected only to a proper documentary process but also the gradual ordering and classification of the goods by types of objects inside cabinets, chests, boxes and drawers in the sacristy, the choir, the church and other nearby rooms. This systematisation is evident by the 1399 inventory and continued in those of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

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