Neapolitan School (xvii) - Saint Stephen, Martyr



1 800 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Description

- Oil on canvas. Restored in 1974 by E. Barnechea. - This mid-seventeenth-century painting, depicting Saint Stephen, first deacon and martyr of the Church, is a work that adheres to the principles of Italian classical Baroque, a style in which the tension between religious and dramatic realism is reached at its maximum expression. The treatment of the figure of Saint Stephen in this work is configured as a divine portrait, an approach that, although deeply spiritual, maintains the connection with the humanity of the martyr, highlighting his suffering and devotion in a setting of great emotional drama. The background, of absolute darkness, follows the tradition of chiaroscuro so characteristic of Baroque painting. The light seems to emerge from within Saint Stephen

Dealer

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himself, bathing his face and silhouette with a glow that underlines the intensity of his sacrifice. The combination of deep shadows and dramatic light falling on his body contributes to the emotional tension of the painting, a technical resource that allows the viewer not only to see the figure of Saint Stephen, but to feel the pain and serenity of his martyrdom. The saint is presented in the foreground, with an expression that reflects a mixture of serenity and suffering. His face, marked by the inner strength of his faith, is at once torn by pain, but also exudes a mystical tranquility, as if physical suffering were overcome by his connection with the divine. The treatment of anatomical details, especially of the hands, which are in a gesture of blessing or renunciation of violence, is of great precision, demonstrating the painter's technical ability to capture humanity in divinity. The dalmatic, the liturgical vestment that marks his rank as deacon, is drawn with great care, highlighting its ecclesiastical importance, but also its relationship to holiness. The rich fabric of the dalmatic, with an almost tangible texture, is reflected in a soft, diffuse light, creating a sense of elevation and sacredness. The red and gold of the fabric lend an aura of heavenly power, contrasting with the simplicity of his face, which reinforces the contrast between the earthly and divine worlds. One of the most powerful attributes of the painting is the stone nailed to Saint Stephen's head, a symbol of his martyrdom. The stone, which in the biblical context marks the instrument of his execution, is depicted in a subtle but heartbreaking manner, its visual presence not just that of an object, but a silent testimony to his physical suffering and his unwavering fidelity to the Christian faith. . . The light falling on the stone makes it almost ethereal, transforming pain into a symbolic element, as if Stephen's suffering had been elevated to a form of spiritual purity. In terms of pictorial quality, the work is exemplary. The technical precision in the treatment of textures, from the stone to the folds of the

dalmatic, reflects an exceptional mastery in the use of oil, combined with a palpable emotion that gives the figure of Saint Stephen a transcendental dimension. The use of chiaroscuro not only fulfills a technical function, but also has a symbolic charge, since the light emanating from Stephen suggests a kind of divine illumination that transcends the earthly scene, as if his martyrdom were, ultimately, an act of cosmic redemption. . In short, this painting is a jewel of classical Baroque that reflects not only the technical virtuosity of the painter, but also a profound ability to capture the spiritual essence of a saint whose life and death were symbols of sacrifice and devotion. The contrast between the physical violence of his martyrdom and the inner peace reflected on his face is one of the most moving qualities of the work, which transforms human tragedy into a transcendent experience. - Dimensions of the unframed painting: 52 x 63 cm / 76 x 67 cm with beautiful old frame.