



**JAIME EGUIGUREN**

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Guatemalan School, 18th century

**The Household of Nazareth**

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## **The Household of Nazareth**

Guatemalan School, 18th century

Oil on canvas

50 × 40 cm

Private collection, France

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## *Jaime Eguiguren*

The present painting represents the theme of the Household of Nazareth, a deeply devotional scene that enjoyed wide circulation throughout the Catholic world during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It depicts the Holy Family within a domestic setting, engaged in everyday tasks that acquire a profound spiritual meaning. The scene reflects a religious sensibility characteristic of post-Tridentine spirituality, which emphasized the sanctification of daily labor and presented the Holy Family as a model of Christian life.

The Virgin Mary appears seated on the left, engaged in household duties as she stirs a pot suspended above the fire. Her figure, clothed in richly decorated garments embellished with gilded ornament, combines domestic simplicity with an almost regal dignity. At the center stands the Christ Child, sweeping the floor and gathering the wood shavings produced by Saint Joseph's carpentry work. This humble action carries strong symbolic resonance: the Redeemer, creator of the universe, performs a menial task, anticipating his role as the spiritual purifier of humanity.

Behind the Child stands an angel participating in the household tasks, while to the right, outside the dwelling, Saint Joseph works the wood, striking it with a hammer. Another angel gathers the fragments of wood produced by his labor. The scene thus presents a perfect harmony between work, family life, and divine order, where even the most humble activities participate in a theological meaning.

The house of Nazareth is therefore transformed into a sacred space of everyday life, where humility, obedience, and manual labor acquire a spiritual dimension.

The composition derives directly from the celebrated engraving "O beatum pavementum" by Hieronymus Wierix (1553–1619), produced in Antwerp at the beginning of the seventeenth century (Fig. 1). The print forms part of a series of engravings devoted to the Infancy of Christ, produced within the Flemish publishing milieu and intended for devotional meditation.

The engraving essentially depicts the same scene:

- Mary working inside the household.
- The Christ Child sweeping the floor.
- Saint Joseph performing carpentry work.
- Angels assisting with domestic tasks.

At the bottom of the engraving appears a Latin text explaining the spiritual meaning of the scene:

*O beatum pavementum!  
Te, qui fecit firmamentum,  
verrit suis manibus.  
Ferte ligna, fiet cibus,  
De farinae satis tribus,  
Sed amoris ignibus.*

The text reflects upon the paradoxical gesture of Christ: the creator of the firmament humbly sweeps the floor of his own house, transforming domestic labor into a metaphor of redemption.

The engravings produced by the Wierix family became one of the most influential iconographic repertoires throughout the Hispanic world during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their wide circulation in artistic workshops in Europe and in the American territories of the Spanish monarchy



Fig. 1 Hieronymus Wierix (1552-1619), *O beatum pavementum*, Antwerp, print

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explains why this composition was adopted by numerous painters. Versions derived from the same model are known in several artistic centers of the Viceroyal world, including examples in New Granada, Peru, and Central America.

The painting studied here closely follows the compositional structure of the Flemish engraving, while introducing elements characteristic of Viceroyal pictorial language. Particularly noteworthy is the abundant use of gilding applied to the garments, whose ornamental patterns create an effect of visual richness and confer a sculptural presence upon the figures.

The artist also pays special attention to domestic utensils—plates, jugs, and other objects—arranged on shelves and ledges. These elements reinforce the everyday character of the scene while simultaneously introducing details reflecting the material culture of the Hispanic world.

The result is an image that preserves the intellectual structure of the European engraving while transforming it, through color and ornamentation, into a painting of intense devotional power adapted to the aesthetic tastes of the Viceroyal artistic milieu.

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