

# Program and Abstracts

AFSCHEIDSSYMPIOSIUM DR MATHILDE VAN DIJK



## CHRIST'S BEST IMITATORS

Saints and Religious Change

Courtroom, Oude Boteringestraat 38

4 July 2025. 13.00-18.30

rsvp by June 13: [crh@rug.nl](mailto:crh@rug.nl)

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**13.00-13.15** Welcome by Dean Mladen Popovic  
**13.15-14.30** Panel I (2x 30 min. + 15 minutes questions)  
- Charles Caspers  
- George Ferzoco  
**14.30-14.45** Coffee break  
**14.45-16.00** Panel II (2 x 30 min. + 15 minutes questions)  
- Godelinde Perk  
- Sven Gins  
**16.00-16.15** brief pause  
**16.15-17.15** Afscheidscollege Mathilde van Dijk  
- *Becoming a Saint in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*  
**17.15-18.30** Borrel

### **Charles Caspers**

Title: Good, Better, Best. The Praying, Fasting and Suffering of Liduina of Schiedam.

Abstract: Liduina (d. 1433) was already considered a saint during her lifetime, and she would later be proclaimed official patron saint of the chronically ill. In this way, she was a guide for the practice of so-called vicarious suffering.

Bio: Charles Caspers is an expert in the field of popular devotions, spirituality, liturgy and mission history. He is a visiting researcher at the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology.

### **George Ferzoco**

Title: The Ever-Changing Imitations of a Medieval Hermit

Abstract: From being a solitary in the wilderness to becoming the sovereign of God's kingdom, the saintly Peter of the Morrone (1210-1296) ceaselessly changed his imitations of Christ. Since then, even his name has changed more than once – today he is probably best known as “St Celestine” - as have his images, most recently celebrated in 2023 by Pope Francis. Who WAS Peter, and who IS he?

Bio: George Ferzoco, elected last year a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society following a term as the Emilio Goggio Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University of Toronto, teaches at the University of Calgary on various cultures, focusing on the religions of the Mediterranean and Europe. He has co-edited books with the University of Calgary's Chair of Christian Thought, Carolyn Muessig, and he has collaborated also with Mathilde van Dijk over the years.

### **Sven Gins**

Title: Playing the Saint: Depictions of Sanctity in Modern Video Games

Abstract: While many video games tend to avoid overt engagement with religious themes, medievaesque titles often embrace the iconography and narrative themes of Christian sainthood in their worldbuilding. This paper explores how medievaesque video games negotiate between medieval tradition and modern sensibilities in their (re)imagining of sainthood.

Bio: Sven Gins is a PhD Researcher (Faculty of Religion, Culture and Society, University of Groningen) whose research considers what medieval bestiaries, aristocratic theme parks, and the criminal prosecution of animals can tell us about human-animal relations then and now. In addition, he cultivates an interest for how medieval heritage resurfaces in modern media.

**Godelinde Perk**

Title: "Other Sisters Were Like Pillars Supporting the House:" Figuring Impairment and Imitatio Christi in Low Countries Sister-books

Abstract: Approaching the Devotio Moderna sister-books' autohagiographical endeavour and call for Imitatio Christi through disability studies, this paper argues that the sister-books present body-minded "infirmity" (a culturally contingent category of difference encompassing both chronic illness and impairment) as evocative of analogous difference attributed to Christ and saints, casting the community as emotionally receptive to reform. This paper first charts how chronic illness and impairment are framed in hagiographical and Christic terms, before scrutinizing how they transform into an index of the convent's affective state and essential to it and considering the ethics of the sister-books' construction of the mystical body of the community.

Bio: Godelinde Gertrude Perk holds a PhD in English Literature from Umeå University (northern Sweden) and is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University (Finland) as a member of the 'Lived Religion and the Changing Meaning(s) of Disability' team. Her current project ('Crippling Sisterhood') examines the interplay between community and disability in collections' of nuns' lives (sister-books) from the Low Countries and nuns' letters from northern Germany