



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

DIPARTIMENTO  
DELLE ARTI



UNIVERSITÄT  
DES  
SAARLANDES

LEEDS INTERNATIONAL MEDIEVAL CONGRESS 2027

# PERFORMING COMMUNITIES

## REGULAR CANONS BETWEEN HISTORY, ART, AND LITURGY

(11TH–15TH CENTURIES)



Lombard painter, *The Lateran Canons, Santa Maria delle Grazie (San Martino)*, Novara.

### CALL FOR PAPERS

Sessions on the IMC special thematic  
focus “Communities”

### CONGRESS

Leeds · 5–8 July 2027

### DEADLINE

14 September 2026

## CONTEXT AND AIMS

When discussing “community” in the Latin Middle Ages, attention tends to focus first on monasticism and, from the thirteenth century onwards, on the mendicant orders: Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinian Hermits. Far less widely acknowledged is the role played by regular canons, who constituted a broad, multifaceted, and by no means marginal religious and institutional phenomenon.

The term “regular canons” does not, in fact, designate a homogeneous reality, but rather a constellation of communities, networks, and congregations: from the Mortarians and Portuensiensians to the canons of the Great St Bernard and the Premonstratensians, and finally to the later Congregations of the Lateran Canons and Windesheim. Although united by their commitment to the common life, these communities differed in their customs, institutional structures, pastoral vocations, and patterns of settlement.

Canonical life combined the communal vocation with the exercise of pastoral care. *Stabilitas in congregatione* did not entail separation from society. Although individual canonries belonged to broader institutional networks governed by shared norms and customs, they maintained close relationships with the ecclesiastical, urban, and territorial contexts in which they operated. The ideal of the *ecclesiae primitivae forma*, founded upon the common life of the clergy and the sharing of possessions, shaped both their religious identity and their pastoral activity, while also fostering the circulation of individuals, works of art, models, and practices. Such plurality invites us to investigate not only what defined a canonical community, but also the means by which each family constructed, rendered visible, and transmitted its identity. Rules, *ordines*, customs, and statutes circulated alongside individuals, liturgical practices, architectural models, and works of art, creating networks of affiliation that extended far beyond the boundaries of any single foundation.

Canonical communities were not defined solely by their rules, institutions, and forms of governance. Their identity took material form and was enacted through the liturgy, the organisation of ecclesiastical and communal spaces, architecture, and artistic production. Within this process, artists were not merely the executors of programmes devised by patrons. They participated in translating values, models, and aspirations into visual and monumental forms, thereby contributing to the construction, representation, and transmission of communal identity. Attention should therefore be given to the extent of their autonomy, their relationships with the canons and with other agents involved in patronage, and their capacity to adapt, transform, and circulate models among different communities.

In connection with “Communities,” the special thematic focus of the 2027 International Medieval Congress at Leeds, these sessions will investigate the ways in which communities of regular canons constructed, negotiated, and rendered their identities visible between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. By fostering dialogue among history, liturgical studies, anthropology, art history, and musicology, the sessions will examine institutional structures, normative texts, networks of affiliation, religious practices, and relationships with wider society in conjunction with the spatial, liturgical, and artistic forms through which canonical communities organised themselves, acted, and represented themselves. The aim is to move beyond traditional disciplinary divisions and reconstruct canonical life in its historical, social, and material dimensions.

## POSSIBLE TOPICS

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Proposals may address Italy or any other area of the medieval West between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. Comparative studies and contributions combining documentary, normative, and liturgical sources with the analysis of buildings, spaces, and works of art will be especially welcome:

- Rules, customs, statutes, and their role in defining communal affiliation;
- Identities, differences, relationships, and processes of reform within canonical networks and congregations;
- Relationships with ecclesiastical and political institutions and with urban and territorial communities;
- Pastoral care, hospitality, charitable provision, and relationships with lay society;
- Liturgy, spatial organisation, and the articulation of the common life as instruments of communal identity;
- Architecture and art as means of constructing affiliation, distinction, and memory;
- Patronage, artistic production, and the circulation of individuals, texts, works of art, models, and practices;
- Communities of female canons and comparisons between different forms of canonical life.

## SUBMISSION

Please send an abstract of no more than 250 words, together with a short CV and the information requested by the IMC, by 14 September 2026, to:

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**Please note:** Unfortunately, we cannot offer funding for travel, accommodation, or any other costs associated with attending the IMC. Remote presentations will also be considered and, where necessary, sessions will be held in hybrid format.