

Summary

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The article is dedicated to presenting the ancient Greek and Roman, as well as Christian sources regarding the virtue of Gratitude, to be observed in modern times among monuments of various categories – in painting and sculpture, commemorative decoration projects, as well as philosophical, theological, and literary texts discussing the desired characteristics of a righteous, fair, good man, and inscriptions reflecting sets of exceptionally positive virtues which described a given figure, especially rulers.

Gratitude is inseparably connected with charity. It is manifested by feeling, repayment, and virtue. The idea of Gratitude has often been manifested by a stork, known for its extraordinary care towards parents already since antiquity. A proposition for representing the virtue of Gratitude was offered by Cesare Ripa in *Iconologia* (1593, illustrated edition 1603), commonly used by artists. It is personified by a woman holding a stork and a twig of lupine. However, the origins of its painting imagery with regard to Italian art prove to go beyond the publication of *Iconologia*. Stork as a symbol of Gratitude appeared already in Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber* (1531) in the *Gratiam referendam* emblem (*An obligation must be repaid*). Its message was widely discussed in Pierio Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica* (1556).

The stork motif, on the basis of observing the animal's habits and symbolism traditions reaching antiquity, became associated with man's best qualities regarding their relations with others – helping other people and cooperating with them. What constituted the basis of such special status of *Gratitudo* virtue were ancient sources of knowledge about storks' habits, reaching Sophocles' tragedy *Electra*, Aristophanes' comedy *The Birds*, Aristotle's *Historia animalium*, Artemidorus' *Oneirokritika*, Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, and Claudius Aelianus' *De natura animalium*. A significant role in strengthening the beliefs about a stork and its habits was also played by *Physiologus* and Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica*.

In antiquity, the topic of Gratitude was examined by Aristotle, Cicero, and Lucius Annaeus Seneca the Younger. Among Christian authors, it was particularly discussed by St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas.

By analysing examples of both verbal and pictorial representations of the virtue of Gratitude, including various thinkers' reflections on that topic, we find it closely related to justice, meaning a noble attitude towards helping others without expecting any prize, as well as remembrance about the received blessings.