The **Portinari Altarpiece** or **Portinari Triptych** (c. 1475) is an oil on wood triptych painting by the Flemish painter Hugo van der Goes representing the Adoration of the shepherds.

The work was commissioned for the church of the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence by the Italian banker Tommaso Portinari, who lived for more than forty years in Bruges, as a representative for the Medici family's bank. Portinari himself is depicted on the left panel with his two sons Antonio and Pigello; his wife Maria di Francesco Baroncelli is shown on the right panel with their daughter Margarita. All, except Pigello, are accompanied by their patron saints: Saint Thomas (with the spear), Saint Anthony (with the bell), Mary Magdalen (with the pot of ointment) and Saint Margaret (with the book and the dragon).

On the central panel, three shepherds fall on their knees before the child Jesus. Van der Goes painted these rustic characters very realistically. Kneeling angels surround the Virgin and the Child, which is not in a crib, but lies directly on the ground, surrounded by an aureole of golden rays. This unusual representation of the adoration of Jesus is probably based on one of the visions of Saint Bridget of Sweden.

In the background, van der Goes painted scenes related to the main subject: on the left panel, Joseph fleeing to Egypt with his pregnant wife; on the central panel (to the right), the shepherds visited by the angel; on the right panel, the Three Magi on the road to Bethlehem.

The lovely still life in the foreground, with the two vases of flowers and the sheaf of wheat (which recalls Bethlehem, "the house of bread"), probably alludes to the Eucharist and the Passion. The wheat refers to the Last Supper, where Christ broke the bread. The orange lilies symbolize the Passion and the white irises purity, while the purple irises and the columbine stalks represent the seven sorrows of the Virgin. Thus, this scene of the birth of Jesus prefigures the Salvation by his death.

When the work arrived in Florence in 1483, it was deeply admired by the Italian artists who saw it, many of whom sought to emulate it. A good example is the **Adoration of the Shepherds** (1485) which Domenico Ghirlandaio painted in the Sassetti Chapel in the church of Santa Trinita in Florence. However, the naturalistic depiction of the shepherds is already present in Andrea Mantegna's **Adoration of the Shepherds** (Metropolitan Museum, New York), which dates from around 1450.
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