



## COSMAS AND DAMIAN

1715

Wood, set in gold and silver

INV. 205, 206

These two sculptures were probably donated by Princess Bernhardine of Hesse-Rheinfels, a canoness at the Abbey.

According to legend, the twin brothers Cosmas and Damian lived at the time of the persecution of Christians. They were both doctors, and were known for treating the sick without pay and healing the blind and the lame. Their charity convinced many people to convert to Christianity, and as a result they were condemned to death by beheading.

Even in the 9th century, Cosmas and Damian were patron saints of Essen Abbey. During the late Middle Ages they also became patron saints of the city of Essen.

The relics of the two saints were probably brought to Essen from Hildesheim by the Abbey's founder St. Altfrid. Cosmas and Damian lived in what is now the border region between Turkey and Syria, where nowadays most of the population are Muslims. Relics are also a phenomenon within Islam, mostly related to the Prophet Mohammed: his coat, beard hair, cup and shoes are held at the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, which also holds a relic of Abraham.