

*Gathering Manna in the Desert*, by Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665)

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Nicolas Poussin painted this work in 1637–1639 for Paul Fréart de Chantelou, an admirer of Christian art, who would become one of his most benevolent patrons. The painting is based on Exodus 16:2–15, which depicts God sending food to the Israelites during their desert wanderings. Poussin is most famous for his nontraditional ordering of his compositions. The painting shows the delivery of manna through the responses of the various figures. Some people fight for the food while others wait patiently. Poussin asks us to contemplate whether we would respond calmly and share with our neighbors or be selfish. In the center, Moses points commandingly to heaven while Aaron prays, appreciating God's intercession at their time of need.