

# PAN

AMSTERDAM

## HEUTINK IKONEN



The three friends of Daniel in the fiery oven

The biblical book of Daniel tells of the prophet Daniel and his three friends, who live in exile in Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar has a huge statue erected and demands that all his servants kneel before it. If they do not, he threatens to throw them into a fiery furnace.

Daniel's friends, named Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, refuse to bow to any god other than the god of their ancestors. Consequently, the three men are thrown into the furnace for punishment. But the king and his entourage see that the flames have no grip on the young men. To his horror, the king sees that a fourth figure has joined the friends, looking like a son of the gods. It turns out to be an angel protecting the friends. The king quickly has the men removed from the fire. Not a hair on their heads was burnt, their cloaks not scorched, and there was not even a burning smell around them.

In this extremely rare iconography, the archangel Michael is depicted as the protector of the three friends. Possibly, the icon served as protection against apostasy from the faith or protection against devastating fire.

The side panels depict the Mother of God, George the Dragon Slayer, the soldier saint Menas and Saint Nicholas.