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## Premonstratensian Prayerbook

In Latin, manuscript on parchment

Western Germany, diocese of Cologne (Limburg an der Lahn?), c. 1450-1500 (after 1466)

*i (modern paper) + 123 + i (modern paper) folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, 1-122, including 97bis, lacking three blank leaves, text complete (collation i<sup>o</sup> ii-viii<sup>o</sup> ix<sup>o</sup> [-8, lacking one blank leaf after f. 69, without loss of text] x-xiv<sup>o</sup> xv<sup>o</sup> [-3, -4, lacking two blank leaves after f. 110, without loss of text] xvi<sup>o</sup> xvii<sup>o</sup>), no catchwords or signatures, frame ruled in brown ink, no visible ruling of lines (justification 73 x 52 mm.), written in brown ink in hybrid bookhand in a single column on 14-19 lines, music in Hufnagel notation added in the sixteenth century on ff. 113v-114v on five-line staves, five staves to a page, rastrum 11 mm., rubrics in red, capitals touched in red, 1- to 4-line initials in red throughout, place markers made by cutting and twisting a thin strip of the parchment from the outer margin, f. 1 stained and ink somewhat faded, but text still legible, parts of the outer margins of ff. 11 and 73 are worn, with no loss of text, stains and signs of use throughout, a tear on f. 6 repaired with transparent tape, in overall good condition. Modern binding of cream-colored vellum over wooden boards, entitled "ORATIONES" on the flat spine in black ink, in excellent condition. Dimensions 112 x 78 mm.*

This small Prayerbook provides insight into the prayer life of Premonstratensian canons regular in the diocese of Cologne at the end of the Middle Ages. The texts included underline the links between public liturgy and personal devotion, a subject often overlooked in the scholarly literature. Added texts (including musical notation), changes to the litany, and obvious dirt are evidence of active liturgical use for a long time – well into the sixteenth century, and perhaps later.

## PROVENANCE

1. Written in Western Germany for use in the diocese of Cologne, in the second half of the fifteenth century, after 1466, as indicated by the evidence of the text. The litanies include a double entry for St. Nicholas of Tolentino among the confessors, canonized in 1466. Liturgical evidence, analyzed below, suggests that the canon regular who used our manuscript, who may have been named Nicholas, possibly worked in the parish of the church of St. Lubentius in Dietkirchen in Limburg an der Lahn (in the modern state of Hesse).

The commemoration of Norbert of Xanten, the founder of the Premonstratensian order of canons regular, is included in red in the calendar (6 June), indicating that this prayer book was made for use of the Premonstratensians. After Norbert was canonized in 1582, his double entry was inserted in the litanies: "S(ancto) P(atre) Noberte" (f. 19v).

The Premonstratensians were canons regular, who followed the rule of St. Augustine. This manuscript includes a double entry for St. Augustine in the litanies, and his feasts in red in the calendar (28 Aug; 11 Oct, Translation). The Office of the Dead, on ff. 70-113, also follows the liturgical use of the Premonstratensian.

The presence of St. Gereon of Cologne (10 Oct) and the 11,000 Virgins in the calendar (21 Oct), the latter in red, and of St. Maternus of Cologne and St. Ursula of Cologne in the litanies, are all evidence that this was made for use in the Archdiocese of Cologne. The feast of St. Willibrord, the first bishop of Utrecht, is included in red in the calendar (7 Nov), but the litanies do not follow the liturgical use of Utrecht, and the veneration of this saint is explained by the fact that Utrecht belonged to the Archdiocese of Cologne.

The inclusion of the rare St. Lubentius, inscribed in red in the calendar (13 Oct), suggests a more precise localization for the manuscript's use, south of Cologne, in the southernmost part of the Archdiocese of Cologne. St. Lubentius of Trier was a fourth-century missionary in Kobern, as well as in the nearby Dietkirchen in Limburg an der Lahn (Hesse), where his relics have been found in a church dedicated to him since the ninth century. The localization is perhaps further endorsed by the modern (nineteenth century?) inscription on the last leaf of the manuscript: "n Limburg" (f. 121v).

The manuscript also demonstrates a particular veneration of St. Nicholas; both his feasts are in red in the calendar (6 Dec; 9 May, Translation), and there are two suffrage prayers to this saint on ff. 59v-61. This might reflect local veneration of St. Nicholas in Limburg an der Lahn, or the original owner of the manuscript belonged to a foundation dedicated to St. Nicholas, or this saint was his personal patron saint, probably because he was named after him.

2. Remained in active liturgical use into the sixteenth century, when various notes in the margins and alterations were added by someone belonging to the Premonstratensian order.
3. Nineteenth-century (?) inscription on f. 121v: "n Limburg" in black ink.

## TEXT

ff. 1-6v, Calendar;

ff. 7-18, Seven Penitential Psalms;

ff. 18-24, Litanies; followed by petitions, invocations, collects and prayers;

ff. 24-29v, The Rosary;

ff. 30-42v, Prayers for before the Mass, beginning with the prayer of St. Ambrose, "Ad mensam dulcissimi convivii tui . . .," accompanied by the hymn "Veni creator spiritus" (ff. 32v-33), Psalms 115, 118, and 116 (ff. 36-37v, 41r-v), the Gospel extract according to St. John (ff. 38v-40), and the Canticle "Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino" (ff. 40-41);

ff. 42v-43, Prayer "Agnus Dei" to be said after the Mass;

f. 43r-v, Marian prayer "O serenissima et inclita mater Domini";

ff. 43v-45v, Prayer "Anima Christi sanctifica me", followed by three more prayers for the Mass;

ff. 46-47, Seven verses of St. Bernard, "Illumina oculos meos...", followed by two short prayers;

ff. 47v-49, Prayer attributed to the Venerable Bede, "Domine Ihesu Christe qui septem verba...";

ff. 49-50, Prayer of St. Gregory the Great, "Ave manus dextera Christi...", followed by a short prayer;

ff. 50-51, Seven prayers of St. Gregory the Great on the Passion of the Lord, "O Domine Ihesu Christe, adoro te in cruce pendentem..."; followed by a short prayer;

ff. 51v-53v, Prayer reflecting the body of Christ, and two further short prayers on the Passion of Christ;

ff. 53v-54v, incipit, "Salve sancta facies ...";

ff. 55-58v, Prayer of St. Ambrose on the Passion of Christ, incipit, "Domine Ihesu Christe fili Dei vivi creator et resuscitator generis humani ...";

ff. 58v-62, Prayers to St. Sebastian, St. Nicholas, and St. Apollonia;

ff. 62-64, Prayers for different days of the week;

ff. 64v-66, Four Marian prayers, beginning with "Ave rosa sine spinis";

f. 66v, Prayer to St. Valentin (of Trier?);

ff. 67-69v, [Originally blank, added in the sixteenth century], Canticle, incipit, "Qui habitat in adiutorio altissimi ...," followed by prayers;

ff. 70-114v, Office of the Dead, Premonstratensian use (cf. Ottosen, see Online Resources); ff. 113v-114v, [originally blank, sixteenth century addition], the responsory "Subvenite sancti Dei" for the Office of the Dead with musical notation;

Note that f. 110 is followed by two stubs of leaves that were certainly blank, probably due to a scribal error; the prayer continues uninterrupted from f. 110v to f. 111, "sicut eos hic vera fides junxit fidelium turnis ....";

ff. 115-120, Psalms 95, 96 and 97, followed by responsories, antiphons, prayers and collects, and ending with a commemoration to St. Agapitus;

ff. 120v-121v, [added in the sixteenth century], two prayers, incipit, "Confiteor tibi Domine Deus omnipotens creator celi et terre ..."; incipit, "O Jesu, dulcissime Jesu pater ..."; [f. 122, frame ruled, but blank].

In the diocese of Cologne the Premonstratensian monasteries were Steinfeld, Dünnwald, Knechsteden, Reichenstein, Wenau, Hamborn, Bedburg, Langwaden, Sceda, Berentrop, Füssenich, Nederehe, Meer, Flaesheim, Wedinghausen, Oelinghausen, Rumbbeck, Ellen, St. Katharina Dortmund, Köln Weiher and Schillingskapellen, all founded in the twelfth century, and Elsey, founded in the thirteenth century. The Premonstratensian monastery of Heinsberg in the diocese of Liège was also closely connected to the houses in the diocese of Cologne. Steinfeld, Knechsteden, Hamborn, Sceda, Berentrop and Wedinghausen housed primarily male religious, while the others were largely women's monasteries.

The Order of the Canons Regular of Prémontré was founded in 1120 by Norbert of Xanten. The Premonstratensians are not monks but canons regular, whose work involved preaching and pastoral ministry often in parishes close to their abbeys. The canon regular who used our manuscript, who may have been named Nicholas, possibly worked in the parish of the church of St. Lubentius in Dietkirchen in Limburg an der Lahn (in the modern state of Hesse) in western Germany, belonging to the diocese of Cologne.

Of interest to historians of the Church and devotional practices in the late Middle Ages, this manuscript is equally of interest to historians of the book. Its texts demonstrate the interconnection between the public liturgy of the Mass and Office and the private devotional life of Premonstratensian canons. Added texts, one with music written in the form of Hufnagelschrift ("Horseshoe nail writing," so-called from the shape of the neumes), and plentiful dirt, offer evidence of its active use for centuries.

## LITERATURE

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Backmund, N. *Geschichte des Prämonstratenserordens*, Grafenau, 1986.

Gehle, B. *Die Praemonstratenser in Köln und Dünnwald: Eine Würdigung ihres Wirkens im Rahmen der Rechtsentwicklung vom hohen Mittelalter bis in die Neuzeit*, Amsterdam, 1978.

Ottosen, K. *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead*, Aarhus, 1993.

Petit, F. *L'ordre de Prémontré*, Paris, 1927.

Rudy, K. M. "Dirty books: Quantifying patterns of use in medieval manuscripts using a densitometer," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 2 (2010), no. 1-2, pp. 1-26.

<https://doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2010.2.1.1>

Thurston, H. *Familiar Prayers: Their Origin and History*, London, 1953.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Online version of K. Ottosen's *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead*

[http://www-app.uni-](http://www-app.uni-regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/PKGG/Musikwissenschaft/Cantus/Ottosen/search.html)

[regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/PKGG/Musikwissenschaft/Cantus/Ottosen/search.html](http://www-app.uni-regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/PKGG/Musikwissenschaft/Cantus/Ottosen/search.html)

International website of the Order of Prémontré (includes both primary and secondary sources relevant to the history and liturgy of the Order)  
<http://www.premontre.org/>

Geudens, F., "Premonstratensian Canons," *Catholic Encyclopedia*  
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12387b.htm>

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