

**Noted Ferial Psalter of the Dominican Katherinenkloster in Nuremberg
In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
Southern Germany, Bavaria (Nuremberg), c. 1500**

ii (nineteenth-century paper) + 176 + ii (nineteenth-century paper) folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, 1-176, complete (collation i⁶ ii-ix¹⁰ x⁸ xi-xviii¹⁰ xix⁴ [-3, -4, lacking two blank leaves at the end]), horizontal catchwords, no signatures, ruled in dark gray ink (justification 120 x 85 mm.), written in brown ink in gothic textualis bookhand on 20 long lines, music is written in square notation on four-line staves in red, seven staves per page, rastrum 11 mm., 1- to 2-line initials alternating in red and blue, one 2-line puzzle initial (f. 146), one 3-line puzzle initial with penwork ornamentation in red and blue of tendrils and a human profile extending to margins (f. 8v), one 6-line initial in red and blue decorated with two dragons and tendrils extending to margins, TEN 7-LINE ACANTHUS INITIALS, NINE WITH BORDERS, initials in pink, blue, green and purple on burnished gold grounds framed with bands in pink, green and blue, the surface of the gold ground ornamented with finely chiseled acanthus leaves and tendrils, accompanied by curving acanthus leaves and flowers extending to the margins in pink, green, red, blue and purple, small balls and buds in burnished gold, leaves and flowers highlighted in liquid gold and white paint, medieval repairs of natural holes in the parchment (f. 24v), ink slightly faded on f. 97 but text still legible, some stains and signs of use, heavily trimmed with loss of border decoration, paint faded in places, but in overall very good condition. Bound in the nineteenth century in brown calf over pasteboards, flat spine blind-tooled with garlands, rosettes, an antique vase, a caduceus and foliage, marbled pastedowns and flyleaves, kept in a modern blue buckram case, spine detached from book block, leather very worn, otherwise in good condition. Dimensions 156 x 120 mm.

Nuns as scribes, artists, and readers occupy a special place in medieval manuscript studies, and among the most significant are the sisters of the Dominican convent of St. Catherine in Nuremberg (*Katharinenkloster*). Famous for its medieval library, one of the largest of its kind in the fifteenth century with over 700 volumes, the convent housed an important scriptorium, in which thirty-two nuns are documented as scribes. This beautiful Psalter, complete and in excellent condition, emerges as a previously unrecorded work written and illuminated by nuns in the cloister.

PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was undoubtedly made for the Dominican convent of St. Catherine in Nuremberg around 1500. The Dominican use and the special veneration of St. Catherine are indicated by the double invocations of these saints in the Litanies (f. 164r-v), as well as the inclusion of their feasts in red in the calendar: St. Dominic, followed by words "patris nostri" (Aug 5; translation, May 24) and St. Catherine (Nov 25). Moreover, the feasts of the Dominican friar St. Thomas Aquinas are included in red in the calendar (Mar 7; translation, Jan 28). The patron saint of Nuremberg, St. Sebaldus, is included in red in the calendar (Aug 19) and is mentioned last, in the most important position, in the litany of confessors. The calendar also includes in red the feasts of St. Henry II, Holy Roman Emperor (July 13) and of his wife, St. Cunigunde of Luxembourg (Mar 3; translation, Sept 9), both buried in the Cathedral of Bamberg, the seat of the archbishop of Bamberg; Nuremberg, where our manuscript was made,

belongs to the archdiocese of Bamberg.

The inclusion of St. Servatius in the calendar (May 13) indicates that the year 1498 can be set as a *terminus post quem* for dating the manuscript, because this is when the saint is included in Dominican calendars (cf. Leroquais, 1934, vol. 1, p. ci).

The Dominican convent of St. Catherine in Nuremberg was founded in 1295 by Konrad von Neumarkt and his wife Adelheid, and its remarkable large church was consecrated in 1297. In 1428, the convent was reformed, followed by a major period of spiritual and intellectual flourishing and development that included building a library with an exceptionally large collection of books (see below). The convent was dissolved in 1596, after the death of the last members.

2. Acquired from a London bookseller by a private collector in 1977.

TEXT

ff. 1-6v, Calendar;

ff. 7-9v, Pater noster, Ave Maria, Credo, Invitatories, Psalm 94;

ff. 9v-151, Ferial Psalter; antiphons provided with musical notation; text complete with the 150 psalms;

ff. 151-162v, Liturgical canticles, hymns and Athanasian Creed: *Confitebor* (Isaiah 12), *Ego dixi* (Isaiah 38:10-21), *Exultavit* (1 Kings 2:1-11), *Cantemus* (Exodus 15:1-20), *Domine audivi* (Habakkuk 3), *Audite celi* (Deut. 32:1-44), *Benedicite omnia* (Dan. III:57-89), *Te Deum*, *Benedictus dominus* (Luke 1:68-80), and *Quicumque Vult*;

ff. 167v-176v, Hymns and chants for Christmas and Easter.

ILLUSTRATION

There are nine 7-line acanthus initials on gold grounds marking divisions of the text. Eight mark the so-called liturgical division of eight in the Psalter, with an initial beginning the morning prayer, Matins, on each day of the week according to secular use (Psalms 1, 26, 38, 52, 68, 80, 97) and an initial (Psalm 109) beginning the psalms for Vespers: f. 9v, Ps. 1, "Beatus vir..."; f. 32, Ps. 26, "Dominus illuminacio mea..."; f. 45v, Ps. 38, "Dixi custodiam..."; f. 58, Ps. 52, "Dixit insipiens..."; f. 71v, Ps. 68, "Salvum me fac deus..."; f. 87, Ps. 80, "Exultate deo..."; f. 101, Ps. 97, "Cantate domino"; f. 115v, Ps. 109, "Dixit dominus..."

Another 7-line acanthus initial on a gold ground begins the Pater Noster prayer at the beginning of the manuscript on f. 7. In addition, a 6-line initial decorated with dragons begins the canticle *Te Deum* on f. 159.

An essentially identical Ferial Psalter was copied at St. Catherine's at the same time by another nun and is now held at the Freiburg University Library (i. Br., Hs. 302; for a fully digitized copy see Online Resources). Its gold initials have been cut out, but the marginal decoration is by the same artist as that in the present manuscript.

St. Catherine's convent in Nuremberg had an unusually large medieval library with over 700 volumes, of which two thirds have survived (Willing, 2012). The library is unusually well documented, giving a very detailed picture of its composition, as well as the use of the books in the convent's everyday life. A medieval library catalogue (started in 1455-7, later expanded), an inventory of the nuns' private books (1455-7), and two catalogues detailing readings in the refectory (1436/7 and 1455/57) have survived; they have been edited by Paul Ruf (Ruf, 1939). The convent library acquired their books from a number of sources, mainly after 1428. Women who entered the convent of St. Catherine brought books with them. Around 1440, the widow Margarethe Tucher gave her collection of twenty-six books of devotional literature, including several contemporary bestsellers (Signori, 2008, p. 268). The convent also had an important scriptorium. Thirty-two scribes are documented, the most skilled of whom was Margareta Karthäuserin. She was one of the ten nuns, who were sent from the Observant Dominican convent of Schönensteinbach in Alsace to reform St. Catherine's in 1428. Between 1458 and 1470 she copied eight Choir Books, now held at the municipal library of Nuremberg.

The convent and its library have attracted great interest in recent years (see Literature, below). A research project aiming to reconstruct the St. Katharina library was carried out at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg from 2005 to 2010, resulting in a two-volume publication by Antje Willing in 2012, as well as a database giving access to all surviving manuscripts (the database was not accessible at the time of writing our description; see Online Resources). As reconstructed from the various book lists compiled by the nuns, Willing has shown that the library had a total of 726 codices, of which 565 were in German (259 preserved), making it the largest medieval German-language library. However, the nuns inventoried only the German-language books, and the Latin holdings have been reconstructed from the surviving volumes (161 codices). Our manuscript adds to our knowledge about the library's books in Latin.

The Psalms were central to life at the convent of St. Catherine. The weekly recitation of the 150 Psalms was the heart of the Divine Office, the daily cycle of prayers sung in common by monks, nuns, and friars of all orders, including the Dominicans (as well as members the secular clergy). Our manuscript is complete, in very good condition, and is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of this famous convent and library.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Dokumentierende Rekonstruktion der Bibliothek des Nürnberger Katharinenklosters

https://univis.uni-erlangen.de/formbot/dsc_3Danew_2Fresrep_view_26rprojs_3Dphil_2Fdgeko_2FLGDP_2Fdo_kume_26dir_3Dphil_2Fdgeko_2FLGDP_26ref_3Dresrep

Database (not available in January 2023)

<http://db-st-katharina.vmguest.uni-jena.de/home/?page=home>

Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg i. Br., Hs. 302

Description: <https://katalog.ub.uni-freiburg.de/opac/RDSIndex/Search?lookfor=kid%3A1654534315>

Images: <http://dl.ub.uni-freiburg.de/diglit/hs302/0001>

Monastic Matrix: St. Katharinenkloster

<https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/monasticmatrix/monasticon/s-katharinenkloster>

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