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Ferial Psalter with Hymns (Franciscan use)

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment and paper (later additions)

Italy, Veneto (Verona?), c. 1460

i (paper) + 128 + ii (paper) folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, top outer corner recto, 1-129 (collation i-xii¹⁰ xiii⁶ xiv⁴ [two added paper leaves, last leaf blank parchment used as paste-down]), horizontal catchwords center lower margin last versos, ruled lightly in lead with two full-length vertical and six full-width horizontal bounding lines (justification c. 256 x 170 mm.), pricking visible outer margin, written in dark brown ink in a Gothic bookhand (textualis) in a single column of 23 lines, with contemporary marginal notes and corrections, f. 128 (added paper leaf) by another less formal contemporaneous hand, rubrics in red, 1- to 2-line alternating red and blue initials throughout, occasionally with contrasting penwork decorations (including ff. 1, 8, 47v, 105, 126), two elaborate 4-line puzzle initials, one in red and blue with very fine penwork ornamentation of the same colors touched with gold extending into the margins, one in blue with purple penwork ornamentation touched with brown, SEVEN LARGE 5-TO 7-LINE ILLUMINATED INITIALS in pink, blue, yellow, and green, on blue and burnished gold or pink and burnished gold ground (some tooled with simple lines and dots), with foliate or acanthus motifs in pink, blue, green, orange, red, and yellow (some extending in the margins), all highlighted with white tracery ornamentation and burnished gold bezants, the initial on f. 1v also contains a male face enclosed by its lower tendril, slight browning, staining, and cockling, occasional small wormholes and marginal dampstaining, certain loss of parchment in lower margin (e.g., ff. 79, 89, 94, 125, carefully repaired and without loss of text), some illuminated initials slightly rubbed and with cracks on the burnished gold ground, otherwise in good condition. Later brown suede binding on wooden boards over 5 raised bands with remnants of 2 added leather straps, with a small tear on lower spine and some scuffs and wormholes. Dimensions 390 x 280 mm.

Grand in size and proportions, this Psalter-Hymnal is a fine example of the large service books used for the recitation of the Daily Office. It was clearly made for an unidentified Franciscan house, and it is elegantly decorated with very fine illuminated initials, perhaps by the Master of Antiphony Q or his workshop, an artist known for the magnificent series of Choir Books destined for the Benedictine monastery on San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. The manuscript merits further study to localize it more precisely, based on the annotations added on the flyleaves.

PROVENANCE

1. Probably made in the Veneto perhaps in Verona in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, perhaps c. 1460, based on the attribution of Dr. Gaudenz Freuler of the illuminated initials to the Master of the Antiphony Q or his workshop, which is thought to have been localized in Verona. Certainly, it was made for use in a Franciscan foundation evident from the hymns for Franciscan feast days, in honor of Saint Francis, his Stigmata, Anthony of Padua, and Saint Clare, which are featured in the latter part of the manuscript.

The Franciscans observed the Transfiguration with its own Office from 1458, so its addition to this Psalter suggests (although does not prove) a date before that.

2. The back flyleaves of our manuscript were used for financial records (possibly gifts to the convent?); the first entry mentions "Franciscus de Prato"; another entry, "Petro da Cremona." Copied in a cursive script, these appear to have been entered over a period of time, but likely date not long after the manuscript itself. Further study of these records may make a more definite localization of this manuscript possible.
3. Purchased in the Swiss trade in the early 1970s, since then privately owned in Switzerland.

TEXT

ff. 1-100v, [Ferial Psalter], *Invitatoria subscripta dicuntur singula singulis dominicis diebus ab adventum domini usque Septuagesimam et a kalendis octobris usque ad adventum. Invitatorium, incipit, "Venite exultemus domino. Iubilemus deo salutari nostro ... Incipit ymnarium per totum annum in dominicis diebus a kalendis octobris usque ad adventum domini ... ad dominicam primam quadragesime. Ymnus, incipit, "Primo dierum omnium ...;"*

Text as follows: f. 1v, *Psalmus*, illuminated initial 'B', "Beatus vir ..." (Ps. 1);

f. 16v, *Psalmus*, [illuminated initial 'D'], "Dominus illuminatio mea ..." (Ps. 26);

f. 26, *Psalmus*, [illuminated initial 'D'], "Dixi custodias vias meas ..." (Ps. 38);

f. 34v, *Psalmus*, [illuminated initial 'D'], "Dixit insipiens in corde ..." (Ps. 52);

f. 42v, *Psalmus*, [illuminated initial 'S'], "Salvus me fac ..." (Ps. 68);

f. 54, *Psalmus*, [illuminated initial 'E'], "Exultate deo adiutori nostro ..." (Ps. 80);

f. 64v, *Psalmus*, [illuminated initial 'C'], "Cantate domino ..." (Ps. 97);

f. 76, *Psalmus*, [illuminated initial 'D'], "Dixit dominus domino meo ..." (Ps. 109);

f. 101-105, Litanies, including Saints Benedict, Francis, Anthony of Padua, and Dominic, among the male saints, and Clare among the virgins;

ff. 105-121v, [Hymns for the liturgical year], *Sabbato de adventum, Ad nonas, ymnus, incipit, "Conditor alme siderus ...;"*

Including hymns (not noted) for the Nativity, Epiphany, the Passion, the Ascension, Trinity Sunday, Corpus Christi, Invention of the Cross, Saint Michael Archangel, Saint Anthony of Padua (f. 123), Nativity of John the Baptist, Apostles Peter and Paul, Saint Mary Magdalene, Saint Peter ad vincula, Saint Clare (f. 115), Assumption of the Virgin, Saint Francis (f. 116v), Apostles, Virgins, Martyrs, Confessors, Popes, Anniversary of the Dedication of the Church, and the Stigmata of Saint Francis.

[f. 121v-125v], Office of the Dead (Roman Use) with nine readings, concluding with a scribal colophon, "Deo gratias. In scriptore recommanda lanima sua a deo et ala uestra oratione, Amen";

f. 126-127, [added] *In secundis vesperis sancti francisci ymnus*, [f. 126v], *In festo sanctissime trinitatis ... corde debito amen*"; [f. 127v, blank];

f. 128rv, [added], *In festo transfigurationis ad vespervas. ant.*

This is grand example of a large Ferial Psalter-Hymnal used to celebrate the Daily Office. All one hundred and fifty Psalms were recited each week during the Divine Office. This Psalter presents the Psalms arranged according to their recitation in the Divine Office over the course of a week (Psalm 1, Sunday at Matins, Psalm 26, Monday, Psalm 38, Tuesday, Psalm 52, Wednesday, Psalm 68, Thursday, Psalm 80, Friday, and Psalm 97, Saturday), and Sunday at Vespers (Psalm 109). As a Ferial Psalter, it also presents the unchanging texts of the Divine Office, including the invitatories, hymns, and antiphons that accompany the chanting of these Psalms throughout the day.

The large size of this manuscript would have made it suitable for use in the Choir. Psalms were chanted according to simple formulas known as psalm tones. Since these relatively simple tones would have been memorized, the lack of musical notation in this Choir manuscript is not surprising.

The Psalter is followed in this manuscript by a Hymnal (beginning on f. 105), with hymns, copied without musical notation, for the liturgical year beginning in Advent, and including important feasts of the Temporal, Sanctoral, and Common of Saints.

ILLUSTRATION

Written with an experienced and confident hand, the manuscript contains seven splendidly illuminated initials with floral decorations: f. 1v, f. 16v, f. 26, f. 34v, f. 42v, f. 54, f. 64v.

The opening initial (f. 1v) is especially richly adorned, with its initial 'B' containing a frontal male face within its lower tendril. The richness of the initials, rendered in vibrant colors of blue, reddish orange, deep green, and some pink, and with meticulously illuminated lush tendrils and extensions, and the punched golden initial field suggest it originated from one of the leading workshops of North Italian book illumination around 1460. Gaudenz Freuler suggests that the style of the initials shows affinities with the illuminations of the Master of the Antiphonary Q of San Giorgio Maggiore.

This illuminator is named after his work in Codex Q of the magnificent series of Choir Books destined for the Benedictine monastery on San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. His art combines various North Italian and Venetian stylistic features, particularly those of Pisanello, and has therefore also been located in Verona and associated with the workshop of the Veronese Stefano Marino (see Castiglioni 2011, pp. 139 ff.). A comparison of the frontal male face in the initial 'B' on f. 1v of our hymnal with the face of the martyr saint from the leaf Inv. 22112 of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice, cut from the namesake Choir Book Q from San Giorgio Maggiore, seems to confirm the artistic connection with the workshop of the Master of the Antiphonary Q.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

"Liturgical Manuscripts," based on the Introduction to liturgical manuscripts, "Celebrating the Liturgy's Books" by Susan Boynton and Consuelo Dutschke
<https://liturgicalmanuscripts.sandbox.library.columbia.edu/>

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