

**Ferial Psalter and Hymnal (use of the Franciscans)
In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
Italy, Emilia-Romagna (Modena? Parma?), c. 1475**

279 ff., missing some leaves at the end of the last two quires, and possibly missing a calendar at the beginning, else complete (collation: i-xviii¹⁰, xix⁸, xx-xxv¹⁰, xxvi⁶ [10-4, wanting vii-x], xxvii⁵ [8-3, wanting vi-viii, this last quire added later]), catchwords, contemporary quire signatures, written in a liturgical gothic bookhand in brown ink in two sizes of script, text copied in two columns, parchment ruled in light brown ink (justification: 245 x 175 mm.), rubrics in red, guide letters in ink, a few calligraphic initials or capitals, painted initials alternating in red or blue, 2-line high initials in red or blue with opposing pale blue or darker red filigree decoration extending in the margins, TWENTY LARGER ILLUMINATED INITIALS painted in color (dark pink, green, blue and bright orange) with white tracery on gold and silver grounds (silver a bit oxidized at times), some colored acanthus leaves and burnished gold or silver besants on hair-line stems spilling into the margins (initials found on ff. 1v, 2v, 49, 71, 89, 107v, 135v, 157v, 186v, 190v, 194v, 199, 204, 207, 210, 212v, 218, 223v, 229, 235), last quire with different painted initials with filigree ornamentation (e.g. ff. 275-279), some contemporary marginal corrections and/or additions, parchment finding tabs. Bound in modern tan calf over wooden boards, back sewn on 5 raised thongs, leather and brass clasps and catches (Some worming, and soiling, stains and other signs of use, but nonetheless an impressive and large volume in good overall condition). Dimensions 405 x 285 mm.

Grand in size and proportions and in clean, fresh condition, 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 fine filigree initials and bright colored painted initials on burnished gold and silver grounds, the latter not very common. The manuscript merits further study to localize better its place of origin, which is probably in the vicinity of Modena or Parma, in the Reggio Emilia region of Italy.

PROVENANCE

1. There is no specific indication of provenance in the text. This Ferial Psalter may have been preceded by a Calendar – now missing – which could have provided a more precise origin or localization for this codex. It is at least certain the manuscript was originally designed for use by the Franciscans, with a number of hymns dedicated to Franciscan saints, Saint Francis (f. 262v), the Stigmata of Saint Francis (f. 259v), Saint Clare (f. 256), Saint Anthony of Padua (f. 251).

Localization and a possible place of origin for this manuscript can only be based on style. There are twenty decorated initials, highly finished, with the curious association of burnished gold and silver grounds and besants, as well as dark vibrant colors. The initials bear resemblance to manuscripts produced in or around Modena and perhaps Parma in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, perhaps related to the reign of Ercole I d'Este (1471-1505). Compare for instance the filigree initials related to Parma in a Missal datable to the 1470s and painted by Martino da Modena (Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 81; see A.M. Visser Travagli, *La miniatura a Ferrara...* Modena, 1998, no. 46). The initials, although certainly more elaborate, share some elements with those in a Psalter-Hymnal also associated with Modena (Montecassino, Abbazia, Corale di San Pietro di

Modena, no. 29; see A.M. Visser Travagli, Modena, 1998, no. 47). Further research will certainly yield better stylistic comparisons and perhaps other volumes from this series of large service books made for a still unidentified Franciscan foundation.

2. Continental Private Collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-235, Ferial Psalter, beginning with the liturgical directions, incipit, "Invitatoria subscripta dicuntur singula singulis dominicis a dominica prima post octauam epiphacie usque ad septuagesima et a kalendis octobris usque ad aduentum, Inuitatorium primus, Uenite exultemus ..."; *Ad nocturnum ymnus*, incipit, "Primo dierum omnium ...";

The following Psalms begin with painted initials:

- f. 2v, "Beatus vir qui non abiit in consilio..." (Ps. 1, Feria I);
- f. 49, "Dominus illuminacio mea..." (Ps. 26, Feria II);
- f. 71, "Dixi custodiam vias meas..." (Ps. 38, Feria III);
- f. 89, "Dixit insipiens in corde suo..." (Ps. 52, Feria IV);
- f. 107v, "Saluum me fac..." (Ps. 68, Feria V);
- f. 135v, "Exultate Deo adiutori nostro..." (Ps. 80, Feria VI);
- f. 157v, "Cantate Domino canticum novum..." (Ps. 97, Sabbato);
- f. 186v, "Legem pone michi ..." (Ps. 118:33, Terce);
- f. 190v, "Defecit in salutare tuum anima meam ..." (Ps. 118:81, Sext);
- f. 194v, "Mirabilia testimonia tua ..." (Ps. 118:129, None):
- f. 199, "Dixit Dominus..." (Ps. 109, Vespers) ;
- f. 204, "Dilexi quoniam ..." (Ps. 114, Vespers, Feria ii) ;
- f. 207, "Letatus sum ..." (Ps. 121, Vespers, Feria iii) ;
- f. 210, "Nisi dominus hedificauerit ..." (Ps. 126, Vespers, Feria iv) ;
- f. 212v, "Memento domine david ..." (Ps. 131, Vespers, Feria v) ;
- f. 218, "Confitebor tibi domine ..." (Ps. 137, Vespers, Feria vi) ;
- f. 223v, "Benedictus dominus deus ..." (Ps. 143, Vespers, Sabbato) ;
- f. 229, "Cum inuocarem ..." (Ps. 4, Compline) ;

ff. 235-274v, Hymnal, rubric, "*Incipit hymnarius et primo Sabbato de aduentu domini ad uesperas ymnus*, incipit, "Conditor alme ..."; ... *In dedicatione ecclesie ad uesperas...* ymnus, incipit, "Urbs beata ierusalem ...," *Ad laudes*. Ymnus. Incipit, "Angularis fundamentum ... Gloria et honor"[this hymn appears complete, although the four following leaves have been excised].

Begins with the first Sunday in Advent, and continues with hymns for major feasts including, among others, Christmas, Epiphany, Saturdays and Sundays in Lent, Passion Sunday, Exaltation of the Cross, the first Sunday after Easter, Anthony of Padua, John the Baptist, the Navivity of Mary, Clare, *in festo sacrorum stigmatum*, *in festiuitatibus angelorum*, *in festiuitatibus beati francisci*, All Saints, concluding with hymns for the common of saints, ending with the dedication of a church.

ff. 275-279v, (added leaves), incipit, "In maiestatis solio tres sedent in triclinio..."; ... "Nouum sydus exoritur ... christus et tandem per//"

Nine hymns, including the hymn for Corpus Christi by Thomas Aquinas, "Pange lingua gloriosi corporis ..."; the final hymn now ending imperfectly.

This is grand example of a large Ferial Psalter-Hymnal used to celebrate the Daily Office. It is certainly of Franciscan origin, with a number of feasts underscoring its Franciscan origin. These include hymns dedicated to Saint Francis (f. 262v), the Stigmata of Saint Francis (f. 259v), Saint Clare and Saint Anthony of Padua. It may have included primitively a Calendar, which might have contained more local saints, allowing for a better localization for this service-book.

The chanting of the psalms lay at the heart of the Divine Office, the prayers said throughout the day and night by members of the secular clergy and religious orders at the offices of Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. Each week the entire Psalter was recited during these services. Ferial Psalters (also called Liturgical Psalters or Choir Psalters), include the psalms, here copied in the order that they are recited during the Office rather than in biblical order, together with the other texts chanted daily during the office, including antiphons and hymns, thus providing a complete repertoire of the ordinary texts for the Office. (They do not include the "proper" texts for the Office, that is the texts that change according to the varying cycle of the liturgical year, the feasts of the saints and other liturgical occasions, that would be found in antiphonals and breviaries).

Since this manuscript was copied for Franciscan Use the distribution of the psalms for each day here agrees with secular (as opposed to monastic) liturgical custom. The common eight-fold division of the Psalter, highlighting the psalms recited at Matins divided among the days of the week, psalms 1, 26, 38, 52, 68, 80, 97, together with psalm 109, the first psalm recited at Vespers, is here expanded to include initials at the psalms for Terce, Sext, and None, as well as the psalms recited on the remaining week days at Vespers.

There is no figurative illumination in this large service-book. However the decorated initials with their vibrant colors and interesting association of burnished gold and silver grounds and small besants are quite striking and well-finished. There were most certainly other volumes in this series, perhaps localizable, and that might furnish supplementary information on the original provenance of this service book. We believe the region of Parma and Modena will offer the best comparables. This manuscript, although missing a few leaves at the end, and possibly at the beginning, is a thoroughly typical example of these large service-books made for monastic foundations in the last quarter of the fifteenth-century. It should be further studied and properly localized.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

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