

**Diurnal and Prayer Book**  
**In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment**  
**Northwestern Germany (Osnabrück), c. 1501-1525**

*i* (parchment) +207 folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil 1-48, 48A, 49-178, 180-207, stubs suggest this is missing as many as 19 leaves, but only 10 with possible loss of text (collation *i*<sup>s</sup> *ii*<sup>s</sup> [-1 before f. 9, with loss of text] *iii*<sup>s</sup> [-3, before f. 18, with no loss of text] *iv*<sup>s</sup> [-1, before f. 23, with no loss of text] *v*<sup>s</sup> *vi*<sup>s</sup> [-1, before f. 38, with no loss of text] *vii*<sup>s</sup> [-4, before f. 48, with no loss of text] *viii-ix*<sup>s</sup> *x*<sup>s</sup> [-5, before f. 74, with no loss of text; -8, before f. 73, possibly with loss of text] *xi-xiv*<sup>s</sup> *xv*<sup>s</sup> [-2, before f. 106, possibly with loss of text; -5, before f. 108, with no loss of text] *xvi*<sup>s</sup> [-1, before f. 111, with no loss of text] *xvii-xx*<sup>s</sup> *xxi*<sup>s</sup> [-7, before f. 156, with loss of text] *xxii*<sup>s</sup> [-4, before f. 160, with no loss of text; -6, before f. 161, with loss of text; -8, before f. 162, with loss of text] *xxiii*<sup>s</sup> *xxiv*<sup>s</sup> [-5, before f. 174, with no loss of text; -8, before f. 176, possibly with loss of text] *xxv*<sup>s</sup> [-3, before f. 179, with loss of text; -5, before f. 180, with loss of text] *xxvi*<sup>s</sup> [-8, before f. 190, with loss of text] *xxvii*<sup>s+1</sup> [3, f. 132, single] *xxviii*<sup>s+1</sup> [3, f. 201, single], ruled in lead with single full-length vertical bounding lines (justification 90-88 x 63-60 mm.), written below the top line in a gothic bookhand in twenty-two long lines, red and occasionally gold rubrics, one- to two-line alternately red and blue initials, three- to six-line initials burnished gold initials infilled in color with white highlights on grounds and with pen flourishing in light pink, three- to six-line burnished gold initials infilled and on colored grounds, usually white or pink with white highlights, sixteen eight- to four-line burnished gold initials infilled and on grounds of tightly curling modelled monochrome foliage (yellow, orange, green, pink, and blue), some with a divided ground in two colors, six four- to eleven-line burnished gold initials against colored grounds with fruit, flowers and birds (ff. 40v, 44v, 95, 174, 180, 188), NINE LARGE FOLIATE INITIALS ON BURNISHED GOLD GROUNDS, six- to twelve-lines (ff. 48, 72v, 88, 94, 95, 104v, 105v, 121, 139), THREE LARGE HISTORIATED INITIALS, six initials accompanied by scatter borders or realistic flowers depicted in the margins leaving the background parchment unpainted (f. 23, scatter border, f. 48, flowers, f. 76v, scrolling flowers, f. 104v, violets, ff. 88 and 99, flowers set within a trellis border), NINE MINIATURES within frames of burnished gold or silver (the burnished silver often oxidized), slightly cockled, some soiling in outer margins, silver tarnished, volume overall and miniatures in particular in excellent condition. Bound in modern brown leather over wooden boards, spine with three raised bands, two brass clasps and catches fastening back to front, edges dyed red, excellent condition. Dimensions 135 x 94 mm.

This charming and sophisticated Prayer Book was copied for, and possibly by, the nuns of Getrudenberg, a convent in Lower Saxony. Manuscripts made for and by women are of special interest, and those from Getrudenberg have yet to be the subject of a comprehensive modern study. The vivid colors of the illuminations, their careful modelling and draftsmanship, and the lavish use of polished gold and silver were the work of a skilled artist, setting them apart from the work of nuns in many neighboring convents.

**PROVENANCE**

1. Copied and illuminated in the early sixteenth century for use by the Benedictine nuns at Getrudenberg in Osnabrück, a Benedictine house for women dedicated to St. Gertrude following the evidence of the style of the illumination and liturgical contents. The Easter table on f. 1v begins with 1501 suggesting a date after that year. In the text, Gertrude is named the "most holy virgin Gertrude our patron" (f. 119v), and is depicted holding a church; she is also the first virgin listed in the litany. Benedict is named "our father" (f. 120). The calendar is also certainly made for use at Getrudenberg: among the feasts with the highest grading ("summum maius") are Gertrude (March 17), the monastery's patron, Benedict (March 21), and Michael the Archangel (September 29). The

Commemoration of Benedict (July 11, usually named as his translation), is "sumum minus," and Crispin and Crispianus (October 25), patrons of Osnabrück, are in red, duplex maius. Anne, here celebrated August 16 instead of on August 26 is also proper to Getrudenberg. Many of the prayers use masculine forms, but this is not uncommon in books copied for nuns.

Gertrudenberg was founded in the second half of the twelfth century in Osnabrück, a town in in Lower Saxony in northwestern German, and suppressed in 1803. The foundation was reformed according to the model of the Bursfeld Congregation by nuns sent from Herzebrock in 1475. One of these nuns, Juttildis von Beveren, served as abbess of Getrudenberg from 1475-1551. Most of the surviving manuscripts from Getrudenberg date from after 1475, evidence that Observant reform was also accompanied by the re-establishment of a scriptorium for copying books, likely directed by Gertrud Brickwedde, who signed several manuscripts from this period. Surviving manuscripts are described in Kühne, Tönnies, and Haucap, 1993 (thirteen manuscripts with sure or possible provenance), and Härtel, 1999 (MSS nos. 1998,7 and 3935); see also Krämer, 1989-1990, 2:643.

2. Sold by Hauswedell, Hamburg, November 27, 1986, no. 2196 (Schoenberg Database no. 31644); Heribert Tenschert, *Illumination und Illustration vom 13. bis 16. Jahrhundert*, Katalog XX, 1987, no. 16; Reiss and Sohn, Königstein/Taunus, *Wertvolle bucher decorative graphic* 61, April 16, 1996, lot 11 (Schoenberg Database 287); Christie's, London, 2001, lot 31.
3. Modern description in German pasted inside front cover; "50163" in pencil, inside back cover.

## TEXT

f. 1, Office prayers for Vespers for the Virgin (probably for the Purification), Michael the Archangel and Gertrude, and Benedict;

f. 1v, Table for computing Easter for the years from 1501-2005;

Hannover, Kestner Museum, MS 1998,7, a Diurnal copied at Getrudenberg in 1523 by Gertrud Brickwedde has an Easter table for 1501-2033 (and the same texts on the liturgical year and readings as found here on f. 8rv); a third example of a medieval Easter Table designed for centuries can be found in New York, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Plimpton MS 170, f. 64v, which continues through 1882 (We thank Consuelo Dutschke for this reference).

ff. 2-7v, Graded calendar in red and black; including "Commemoratio abbatum et abbatissarum" (7 January), Maurus, in red, twelve lessons (15 January), Anthony, in red, twelve lessons (17 January), "Commemoratio fratrum et sororum" (7 February), Scholastica, in red, duplex minus (10 February), "Commemoratio fundatorum" (3 March), Gregory, in red, duplex maius (12 March), Gertrude of Nivelles, in red, sumum maius (17 March), Benedict, in red, sumum maius (21 March), "Commemoratio fundatorum" (7 April), "Commemoratio fratrum et sororum" (4 May), Servatius (13 May), Boniface, in red, twelve lessons (5 June), "Commemoratio benefactorum" (6 June), Albanus (21 June), 10,000 martyrs, in red, twelve

lessons (22 June), Ulric (4 July), Kilian (8 July), Commemoration of St. Benedict, in red, summum minus (11 July), Panthaleon (28 July), "Commemoratio fratrum et sororum" (4 August), Anne, mother of Mary, in red (16 August), Augustine, in red, duplex maius (28 August), "Commemoratio benefactorum" (3 September), Magnus (6 September), Lampert (17 September), Michael, archangel, in red, summum maius (29 September), Leodegar (2 October), Gereon (10 October), Gallus (16 October), 11,000 Virgins, medium, in red (21 October), Severus (22 October), Severinus (23 October), Crispinus and Crispianus, in red, duplex maius (25 October), Willibrord (7 November), and Othmar (16 November);

The calendar is very similar (possibly identical) with a Psalter from Getrudenberg sold at Les Enluminures, formerly TM 415.

f. 8rv, Table explaining the liturgical year and the cycle of readings;

ff. 9-22v, Office of the Virgin for Matins, Lauds and Prime; followed by the Athanasian Creed and prayers, concluding with prayers for the dead;

Missing a leaf before f. 9; text begins imperfectly, "//hii errant corde ..."; a stub is visible before f. 18, but the text, ff. 17v-18, is continuous. It is possible that there was once a miniature before f. 18, which would have been blank on the verso, but which also would have interrupted the text.

ff. 23-69v, Ferial Psalter for Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline (the lesson for Compline on f. 64v, begins, "Fratres sobrii estote ..."), concluding with antiphons honoring the Virgin at different hours and times of the liturgical year

Missing a leaf before f. 23, which could logically have been a miniature introducing the Psalter, blank on the recto; there is a stub before f. 38, but the text of the hymn for Sext, ff. 37v-38 is complete (and there is no reason for a miniature at this point). There is also a stub before f. 48, but there is no loss of text between ff. 47v-48. There is a major initial on f. 48, so possibly there once was a miniature facing the initial, blank on recto, and interrupting the text.

ff. 69v-70v, Pater noster, Ave Maria, Credo, prayer with indulgence;

ff. 70v-72, Hours of the Cross (hymns for each hour copied without divisions as one long hymn); prayer, incipit, "Hec es preclarum vas ..." said after conventual Mass;

A stub suggests a leaf is missing before f. 71, but the text is continuous f. 70v-71, and there is no reason for a miniature here.

ff. 72v-105, Temporale for the day hours (usually Terce, Sext, and None, with some texts for Vespers) from the first Sunday in Advent to the twenty-third Sunday after Trinity Sunday and then the Sunday before Advent, followed by the dedication of a church;

A leaf may be missing before f. 73, possibly with loss of text; there is a major initial on f. 72v, so it is possible there was a facing miniature, blank on verso.

ff. 105-112v, Common of the Saints for the day hours (Prime, Terce, Sext, None);

Leaf missing before f. 106 (possible but unlikely loss of text, but it would have been the leaf facing a major initial); stubs remain before f. 108 and before f. 111, but without loss of text.

ff. 112v-139, Sanctorale for the day hours from Stephen (26 December) through Thomas apostle (21 December);

Includes the "most holy Saint Gertrude our patron" (*In festo sanctissime Gertrudis virginis patronae nostre* ...) beginning on f. 113, and the feast of St. Benedict "our father" (*In festo sancti benedicti abbatis patris nostri* ...) on f. 120.

ff. 139-150v, Prayers, *Oratio beati ambrosii ante celebrationem*, incipit, "O summe sacerdos ..."; [prayers said before communion], f. 142, *Oratio ante communionem*, incipit, "Omnipotens et misericors deus ecce accedo ..."; f. 143, *Alia oratio ante communionem*, incipit, "O dulcissime atque amantissime domine ..."; f. 143v, *Alia oratio ante communionem*, incipit, "Ad mensam dulcissimi ..."; [prayers to say after communion] f. 145, *Oratio post sacram communionem*, incipit "Aue sanctissima caro ..."; f. 145v, *Ad beatam virgo*, incipit, "O serenissima ..."; f. 146, *Post communionem*, incipit "Ineffabilem misericordiam tuam ..."; ..., f. 150, *Oratio beati thome de aquino in elevatione corporis Christi*, incipit, "Adoro te deuote latens deitas ...";

ff. 150-156v, Prayers, beginning with prayers for morning, evening and thanksgiving; f. 155, prayers to the Virgin, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; f. 156, prayer attributed to St. Bonaventure, incipit, "Laus et gloria sit omnipotencie eterni patris ...";

Leaf missing before f. 156, with loss of text.

ff. 156v-165v, *Bonifacius papa viii concessit ... remissionem omnium peccatorum*, incipit, "Deus qui pro redemptione ..."; incipit, "Adoro te domine ihesu christe in cruce pendentem ..."; f. 158v, [Prayer on the seven last words of Christ attributed to Bede], incipit, "Domine ihesu christi qui septem uerba ultimo ..."; f. 160, [prayer], incipit, "Salve ihesu bone victor ..."; incipit, "O bone ihesu. O piissime ihesu ... O dulcis ihesu remissio//"; f. 161, [prayers on the Passion of Christ, beginning with a meditation on the Crucifixion to read attentively], incipit, "O misericordissime domine ihesu ...";

Stub visible before f. 160, but there is no text lost between ff. 159v-160; a leaf is missing before f. 161 and before f. 162, in both cases with loss of text.

ff. 165v-168, [Prayer attributed to St. Augustine in the event of sudden death], incipit, "Deus cui propicius esto mihi peccatori ..."; f. 168, prayers for bedtime;

ff. 168-172, [Prayers to the Virgin Mary, including the prayer to be said while looking at the image of the Virgin of the sun and the crescent moon, found on f. 168v], *Sixtus papa quartus contulit omnibus fidelibus deuote hanc orationem legentibus coram imagine beate virginis in sole depicta et lunam sub pedibus* ..., incipit, "Aue sanctissima maria mater dei ....";

ff. 172-173, [Prayer of St. Anne with an indulgence granted when it is said before an image of Anne and the Virgin, here on f. 172v], incipit, "Aue maria graia plena . . . , Aue anna uenerabilis mater . . .";

ff. 173-179v, Suffrages of the Archangel Michael, your guardian angel, James, John the apostle, Peter, Paul, Jerome, Anthony, Clement, Gertrude ("patrona nostra"), Katherine, the ten thousand virgins, and Mary Magdalene;

Stub visible before f. 174, but apparently with no loss of text; leaves missing before ff. 176 and 179, with loss of text.

ff. 180-188, Seven Penitential Psalms and Litany (with Gertrude first of the female saints) and intercessions;

Leaf missing before f. 180, with loss of text.

ff. 188-207, Office of the Dead (Benedictine Use, Bursfeld Congregation); [ending mid f. 207; remainder and f. 207v, blank but ruled].

Leaf missing before f. 190, with loss of text.

## ILLUSTRATION

The subjects of the miniatures are:

f. 78, the infant Christ on a cushion, holding an orb within a six-pointed star;

f. 115v, St Agnes;

f. 119v, St Gertrude as a Benedictine Abbess;

f. 120, St Benedict;

f. 168v, Virgin of the crescent moon clothed in the sun;

f. 172v, St. Anne with the Virgin and Child;

f. 173v, Angel with kneeling Benedictine monk, with two speech banderoles: "Quando orabas cum lacrimis ego obtuli orationem tuam Domino. Thobie xii [cf. Tobit 12:12]": and "Angele dei sic tibi cura mei";

f. 175v, St. Paul;

f. 178, St. Clement;

The subjects of the historiated initials are:

f. 23, Christ as Savior, standing with one hand raised in blessing, the other holding an orb, with a speech banderole: "qui me inuenerit inueniet uitam et hauriet salutem" [Proverbs 8:35], and with a three-quarter scatter border on brushed gold (leaving the inner margin empty);

f. 76, the infant Christ with a tiny lamb sitting on a cushion in a green field, with a speech banderole, "Paruulus huius natus est nobis et huius datus est nobis" [cf. Isaiah 9:6], with a border in the outer and lower margins of large flowers and scrolling foliage;

f. 157, Christ as the Man of Sorrows with the instruments of the Passion.

The manuscript's decorative scheme also includes nine large illuminated initials which are as skillful as the miniatures and the historiated initials. Initials are blue, green, or pink, most constructed of curling three-dimensional acanthus highlighted in white, set on highly polished gold grounds, and infilled with bold exotic floral motifs on thin stems with curling acanthus in vivid colors: ff. 48, with flowers in the border, 72v, 88, with a trellis border, 94, with a trellis border, 95, 104v, with violets in the border, 105v, 121, and 139.

The miniatures and initials in this manuscript are thoroughly charming. The subjects depicted link it to the style often called "nun's work" (in German, *Nonnenarbeiten*), art produced by women in the cloisters of Germany and eastern France, especially along the Rhine. We see this in the prominence of images of Jesus as an engagingly plump infant, whether seated on a cushion holding his lamb (f. 76), or shown within a decorative star, once again on a cushion, holding an orb symbolizing the world (f. 78), or gazing lovingly at his mother (f. 168v) – and as an equally fetching toddler with his mother and grandmother (f. 172v). But the sophistication of these images, which are carefully drawn, with complete backgrounds, either in meadows strewn with flowers, interiors, or against brocaded bands, set them apart from the work of neighboring convents of nuns.

If this manuscript was in fact not only copied at Gertrudenberg, but also illuminated there, the artist was likely professionally trained. Stylistically, this manuscript resembles the Diurnal copied by Gertrud Brickwedde in 1523, Hannover, Kestner Museum, MS 1998,7 (Härtel, 1999). The faces are sweet, with tiny black dots for eyes, straight noses, and small red mouths, in the style common to German work from the Upper Rhine (and even farther North). Women with long blond or red hair, wear high-necked gowns with voluminous sleeves; drapery is shaded, and often edged in gold. The colors in both the miniatures, and the illuminated initials and borders are vivid and very bright, with lavish use of highly polished gold and silver. A previous cataloguer reported that two miniatures in the same style are found in the Graphische Sammlung of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (Inv. Mm.49 and Mm.156), and that the latter, of St. Christopher, might even come from this manuscript; we have been unable to verify this suggestion.

Manuscript production by nuns in Observant houses is an important topic – a study focusing on Gertrudenberg seems overdue. The reform at Gertrudenberg, as in many houses, initially met with resistance. Two young nuns were said to been happy with the reform, but five older women left, only to return later since they were not content with life outside the cloister (Winston-Allen, 2004; Poppe, 1984).



This manuscript is a Diurnal, that is the book with the text of the day-time hours of the Divine Office, combined with a large repertory of prayers. The contents and the lavish illumination suggests this was a personal book for one of the nuns. Some of the images here were an essential element of a nun's devotional practice; indulgenced prayers, specifically to be recited before the appropriate image, accompany the miniatures of the Virgin clothed with the sun (f.168v) and St. Anne with the Virgin and Child (f.172v).

The collation (that is the physical structure) of this volume is puzzling. Manuscripts were made from sheets of parchments that were folded in half and stacked together known as quires. When there are single sheets within a given quire, this was either because half of a sheet was removed sometime in the book's history, or a singleton was inserted deliberately. Books of Hours from the fifteenth century, for example, often include miniatures painted on separate leaves inserted into manuscripts. In this manuscript, there are nineteen leaves (none of them inserted miniatures) that are missing their conjugate half; only small stubs remain. In ten of these cases we can conclude that a leaf was removed at the some point in the manuscript's history, since there is possibly text missing. However, in nine cases, even though there is a stub, there is no break in the text, and perhaps nothing is missing. It would be very unusual for scribes to insert so many single text leaves into otherwise regular quires, and further study is called for.

## LITERATURE

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Winston-Allen, Anne. *Convent Chronicles. Women Writing About Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages*, University Park, Pennsylvania, 2004.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Susan Boynton and Consuelo Dutschke, "Celebrating the Liturgy's Books" (introduction to liturgical manuscripts)

<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/manuscripts/>

Osnabrück (official website, with brief history of the city):

<http://www.osnabrueck.de/25374.asp>

"Gertrudenberg," Monastic Matrix

<https://monasticmatrix.osu.edu/monasticon/gertrudenberg>

Cabrol, Fernand. "Breviary," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, New York, 1907

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02768b.htm>

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Calendar is for the diocese of Osnabrück calendar, similar but not identical to those in Gertrudenberg books

<http://bilder.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de/gaeste//grotefend/grotefend.htm>

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