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## Service Book for a Flagellant Confraternity In Latin and Italian, illuminated manuscript on parchment Italy, Florence, c. 1470-1480

*i + 68 + i folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, 1-68, complete (collation i-iv<sup>8</sup> v<sup>4</sup> vi-ix<sup>8</sup>), vertical catchwords, ruled in brown ink (justification 94 x 137 mm.), written in black and red inks in gothic textualis bookhand on seventeen lines, 1- to 4-line initials alternating in burnished gold or blue with elaborate penwork flourishing in red and blue, one 3-line initial in burnished gold on a blue and red ground decorated with white penwork and with a floral border in the outer margin (f. 29v), one 5-line initial in burnished gold on a blue and red ground decorated with gold and silver penwork and with floral tendrils extending to the outer border (f. 53v), THREE HISTORIATED INITIALS (ff. 1, 8, 36v), TWO FLORAL BORDERS, one full page, framed with rectangular bands in burnished gold, with TWO WOODCUTS filling two of the three medallions (f. 1), and another with three-sided floral border (f. 36v), some pigment loss and heavy thumbing, otherwise in very good condition. In a CONTEMPORARY BINDING of goatskin over wooden boards blind-tooled with rolls of circular, lozenge and foliage motifs, edges scuffed, re-backed, evidence of three leather straps to each edge that are now lacking, as are the catches, otherwise in excellent condition. Dimensions 235 x 168 mm.*

Lavishly decorated with three fine historiated initials in the style of the anonymous Florentine illuminator, the Master of Lattanzio Riccardiano, numerous initials in burnished gold, and elegant penwork flourishing. The illuminated border of the frontispiece notably includes two woodcut medallions. The luxury of this volume stands in marked contrast to its contents, which describe in detail the extreme penitential practice of self-flagellation practiced by this confraternity.

### PROVENANCE

1. Made for the use of a confraternity of "blue penitents" in Florence, c. 1470-1480, as supported by the script, style of illumination, and the text. Saint Minias, the first Christian martyr of Florence, occupies the final position among the martyrs in the litanies, and Saint Zenobius, the first bishop of Florence, has the final position among the pontiffs and confessors. The style of illumination confirms the origin of the manuscript in Florence at this date, and the opening initial shows the blue habits worn by the brothers for whom it was intended.
2. A prayer on f. 52, added in a near-contemporary hand, is for the protection of the city of Pistoia.
3. Martin Schøyen (1940--), Oslo and London, MS 119; bookplate inside upper cover; bought at Sotheby's, June 21, 1988, lot 94, and sold at Sotheby's on December 1, 1998, lot 98.

### TEXT

ff. 1-7v, [Initiation ceremony for the admission of a novice, avowal and enrobing], *Ricevendo alcuno novitio uno sacerdote o uno de frategli in suo luogbo in ginocchiato all altare...*, incipit, "Misere mei deus secundum magnam misericordiam tuam [Ps. 50] ...";

ff. 8-36, [Night offices of the Virgin], incipit, "Domine labia mea aperies..."; [concluding, from f. 34, with the rite for administering "la disciplina";

ff. 36-51, Seven Penitential Psalms and litanies, with saints Minias and Zenobius of Florence, as well as Romuald of Ravenna, the founder of the Camaldolese order, who occupies the final position among the monks and hermits;

ff. 51v-52v, [Contemporary additions, prayers to the plague saints Sebastian and Roch], incipit, "Omnipotens sempiterne deus qui meritis et precibus beati et gloriosi martiris tui Sebastiani..."; [followed, in a different hand, by a prayer of the Virgin for the city of Pistoia], *Oratione della madonna: per la cipta di Pistoia*, incipit, "Deus qui angelorum munitionibus sanctam hierusalem visitas et protegis ...";

ff. 53-67, [Variations and order for the Tenebrae from Lauds for Maundy Thursday], *In ginocchiati tutti finite le lectione ...*, incipit, "Respice quaesumus domine super hanc familiam tuam ...", [Concluding with the hymn to be said during the washing of feet], incipit, "Dulcis ihesu memoria, dans vera cordis gaudia ...";

ff. 67-68, [Contemporary additions in different hands, prayers to saints Joseph and Anne, and capituli for the Nativity and its Vigil], incipit, "Concede quaesumus omnipotens deus ..."; [f. 68v, blank].

## ILLUSTRATION

Three historiated initials, subjects as follow:

f. 1, The governor of the confraternity in his hooded blue habit dressing a young man kneeling in front of him with a similar blue robe (initial rubbed); with a full floral border including three roundels, upper margin, "yhs" in gold on a blue ground; outer border, contemporary woodcut of the Crucifixion; lower border, contemporary woodcut of the Annunciation;

f. 8, Virgin and Child;

f. 36v, King David (initial rubbed), with a three-quarter floral border.

The style of the historiated initials finds close comparisons in the works of the anonymous Florentine artist, the Master of Lattanzio Riccardiano, named after MS 544 at the Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence. On f. 1, the penwork in gold decorating the blue initial 'M' incorporates a distinctive semicircular motif, one on each vertical stroke of the 'M,' which is nearly identical to that painted by the Master of Lattanzio Riccardiano in the Gradual now at the Museo dell'Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence (Garzelli, 2004, fig. 669). The acanthus leaves posed on the body of the initials and the facial features of the figures are painted in a very similar manner in the two manuscripts. A revealing comparison can also be made with the dainty

tree that was painted behind the brothers in our initial, now partially flaked. It closely resembles the tree in the landscape of the Nativity in the Florence Gradual (Garzelli, 2004, fig. 669).

Annarosa Garzelli places the activity of the Master of Lattanzio Riccardiano in the 1470s and analyzes his style as independent of Zanobi Strozzi and within the ambiance of the Master of Pratovecchio (Garzelli, 2004, pp. 200-201). His style is also close to that of Mariano del Buono di Jacopo; the iconographic model for King David playing his psaltery on f. 36v in our manuscript appears to derive from the workshop of Mariano, or from a common source (cf. Codex Pollick, University of Victoria Libraries, MS Lat. 3, f. 112, and British Library, Yates Thompson MS 23, f. 147). Mariano del Buono was one of the great Florentine masters at the end of the fifteenth century along with Francesco d'Antonio del Chierico, Francesco Rosselli, Attavante degli Attavanti, Cherardo and Monte di Giovanni di Miniato, and Boccardino the Elder. For a full-page illustration by the Master of Lattanzio Riccardiano, see the Roman Missal at the British Library, add. MS 14802, f. 136v.

The pages introducing the manuscript and the Penitential Psalms, ff. 1 and 36v, are decorated with borders framed with rectangular bands in burnished gold that incorporate medallions. On f. 36v, the medallion in the lower border was at some stage painted blue, but the paint has smudged. On f. 1, there are three medallions; the monogram of Christ is painted in the upper margin, and in the medallions in the outer and lower borders, which were left unpainted, are instead filled with printed woodcut roundels representing the *Annunciation to the Virgin* and the *Crucifixion with Mary and John* (each measuring 23 mm.). It is possible that these medallions (and perhaps also the one in the lower border on f. 36v) were intended to contain the coat of arms and the emblem of the patron, as was customary, but for some reason these were never painted in the spaces provided. However, since the woodcuts are contemporary and fit the medallions perfectly, they were likely added early in the history of the manuscript, and possibly as part of the original plan for this page.

An interesting codicological detail can be noticed on f. 8, on which the illuminator painted the initial with the Virgin and Child. The margins bear the impression of the burnished gold lines of all the borders on the conjoint leaf, f. 1 (appearing as light indented lines). This suggests that the bifolium was folded when the gold on f. 1 was applied (contrary to what one might expect).

This manuscript contains orders of service for meetings of a confraternity of blue penitents. Religious confraternities, serving both the spiritual and temporal aspirations of lay people, were a ubiquitous feature of medieval and early modern Europe. One dramatic and particularly ascetic class of these were the *disciplinati*, who practiced self-flagellation in public and in private to bring both individual and group forgiveness by emulating Christ's suffering. The sixteenth-century historian Benedetto Varchi noted that in Florence there were thirty-eight confraternities known as companies of discipline because they whipped themselves after the Divine Office, and four confraternities, more secret and devout, known as companies of the night because that was the time they met. All the flagellant groups wore hooded habits to preserve their anonymity, commonly white or black. This manuscript, however, was made for a confraternity that wore blue robes, as the opening initial makes clear. The copious rubrics in Italian in our manuscript give a detailed and vivid account of the flagellation, giving instructions and texts for the governor, priest and the brothers, even detailing the tone of voice to be used, and the time for the flagellants to re-clothe themselves and put the whips away.

The blue penitents were dedicated to the Virgin Mary (blue was the Marian color *par excellence*), their most public devotions were the processions of Holy Thursday and Corpus Christi. The robes of the blue penitents often bore the image of Saint Jerome. One of the most fervent flagellant confraternities in Florence was the Buca di San Girolamo (Jerome), who met at nighttime in underground premises, and who counted among their members several artists and artisans, including Luca della Robbia and Paolo Uccello.

## LITERATURE

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Weissman, R. *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, New York, 1982.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Codex Pollick, University of Victoria (fully digitized)

<http://contentdm.library.uvic.ca/cdm/ref/collection/collection15/id/1550>

Confraternity of penitents (Wikipedia)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confraternity\\_of\\_penitents](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confraternity_of_penitents)

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