

# LES ENLUMINURES

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**Gradual with some texts for the Office of Vespers  
In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment  
Italy (Florence), c. 1511-1525; 1543**

ii (parchment) + 94 folios on parchment, foliated in red Roman numerals top outer corner recto, I-LXXXVII, and in modern Arabic numerals, 88-94, complete (collation i-ii<sup>2</sup> iii-iv<sup>8</sup> v-viii<sup>6</sup> ix-xi<sup>8</sup> xii<sup>6</sup>), horizontal catchword in quire three, several quires with leaf signatures bottom outer corner recto in Arabic numerals, ruled in very fine light brown ink with 36 lines long lines and with double vertical bounding lines (justification 310-305 x 190-185 mm.), written in a formal Gothic bookhand, most pages with six red four-line staves with square musical notation and six lines of text, red rubrics throughout, remaining decorative schemes vary: ff. 1-40, one-line red initials with blue penwork and (added) yellow or liquid gold (over blue penwork harping), NUMEROUS PAINTED INITIALS in a later style at the beginning of texts, initials are slightly larger than one line of text, extending into the musical staff, initials are gold and pink, infilled and on square white-patterned blue grounds in thin frames of red and blue with gold, red, and blue marginal extensions decorated with blue penwork and small balls, sometimes gold; ff. 41-58v, VERY LARGE BLUE PENWORK INITIALS (ff. 41, 45, and 50), equivalent to two lines of text and two musical staves, with bold red penwork, blue initial with red penwork in the same style (f. 54), equivalent to one line of text and music, one-line alternately red and blue initials, with first majuscule following large penwork initials a delicate cadel initial (some with faces); ff. 59-86, plain red initials at the beginning of new feasts (rubrics probably copied by another hand), one-line red initials; ff. 86-end, painted initials similar to those on ff. 1-40, but with red or blue penwork extending from the initials (see ff. 86 and 91), with one initial, f. 87v, with red penwork in the same style as those on ff. 41-58v, FULL-PAGE ILLUMINATED FRONTISPIECE, front flyleaf, f. ii verso, of a red cross on a black ground, with a double frame in beige and gold leaf, an empty outer panel, the whole thing framed along the outer edge in beige and red (later addition), gutters of some quires reinforced with parchment strips, lower margin of f. 83 cut off, lower margins of ff. 91-93 reinforced with parchment, moderate signs of use, slight worming in the first few folios, overall in very good condition. ORIGINAL BINDING of dark brown leather over wooden boards, tooled in blind with five sets of four fillets framing the outer edges and two rectangular borders infilled with knotwork and fleurons, surrounding a center panel filled with a diamond framing a large center ornament, spine with four raised bands, once fastened front to back, decorative brass shell-shaped catches remain back board, spine quite damaged, with broken hinges revealing the structure, leather dry and fragile on the spine, heavy worming particularly to front cover. Dimensions 400 x 279 mm.

A large, attractive Choir Book with a fascinating provenance produced in the tumultuous years in Florence following the death of Savonarola (1452-1498). The dated ownership inscription documents the presence of this manuscript in the convent of Santa Crocetta during the lifetime of its founder, Domenica da Paradiso. A remarkable woman, Domenica exerted considerable influence across Europe through her letters, sermons, and other writings. There are later (though not much later) pretty, painted initials, an index, and an illuminated frontispiece perhaps added by the nuns themselves.

## PROVENANCE

1. Most likely copied and decorated in Florence soon after the foundation of the monastery of Dominican nuns, Santa Crocetta, in 1511. The evidence of the text of the volume, which begins with the feast of the Invention of the Cross, supports our

suggestion that this was copied for this house of nuns. Nonetheless, the possibility remains that the nuns were given an earlier Gradual, dating from the end of the fifteenth century, or even somewhat earlier, which they adapted for their own use. Script and penwork initials very similar to those found in the middle section of the volume (ff. 41-58v) can be found in Florentine manuscripts dating from the later decades of the fifteenth century. These initials, for example, are very similar to the penwork initial on the verso of a leaf depicting the Dedication of a Church from a Gradual painted by Mariano del Buono (1433-c. 1504), now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Online Resources).

2. Owned by the Dominican nuns of Santa Crocetta (often simply called la Crocetta) by 1543, when an ownership note was added on the front pastedown, "Del Monasterio di Sancta Croce di Firenze decto/ altrimenti Della ven[erabil]le Sor/ Domenica dal Paradiso/ 1543." The large frontispiece of a Cross (front flyleaf, f. ii verso), so appropriate for this convent, where the nuns all wore red crosses on their habit, as did the founder of the order, was certainly added at la Crocetta, as were the painted initials within the volume.

The monastery of the Holy Cross, Santa Crocetta, was founded as a Dominican convent on land formerly owned by the Medici near the church of SS. Annunziata in Florence by Domenica Narducci da Paradiso (1473-1553), a remarkable woman, who certainly succeeded in fulfilling Savonarola's (1452-1498) vision that women could play important roles in the spiritual and social reform of society. Her influence extended far beyond her own community, and she left a significant corpus of writings, including letters, sermons, and spiritual and visionary works, including *The Vision of the Tabernacle*. La Crocetta was founded in 1511 and received approval from the Pope in 1515. The convent was suppressed in 1808, and the nuns relocated to the via Aretina, where they remain. The Archivio della Monastero della Crocetta houses Domenica's writings, as well as archival documents related to the history of the convent.

3. Additions testify to its continued use. As mentioned above numerous changes probably date to 1543 when the ownership note was added: the decoration was re-done, with the addition of the large frontispiece, painted initials added at the beginning of many of the feasts, and smaller initials highlighted in yellow/gold wash, with additional pen decoration. An index was added to the beginning and the volume was foliated. Later notes include marginal cross references and short additions in a cursive script.
4. Small black bookdealer's label lower right corner front pastedown: "L'AMATEUR/ Libros Grabados/ Florida 730/ Buenos Aires."

## TEXT

Inside front cover, pastedown, incipit, "Del monasterio di Sancta Croce di Firenze decto atrimenti Della venerabile Sorore Domenico dal Paradiso, 1543";

[front flyleaf recto blank], front flyleaf verso-ii, Index, in black and red, with feast names and folio references;

Front flyleaf, f. ii verso, full page frontispiece (added), of a red cross;

ff. 1-8v, Vespers and Mass of the Invention of the Holy Cross (September 14); f. 4v, *Ad missam, introitus*;

ff. 8v-15v, Mass in honor of the Virgin Mary;

ff. 15v-21, Vespers and Mass for the Common of Saints for one virgin;

ff. 21-26, Mass of the dead;

ff. 26-38v, Settings for the Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus and Agnus dei, *In minoribus duplicibus*, and f. 30, *De beata virgine*, f. 35, Creed;

ff. 38v-40, *Tractus*, incipit, "Beatus vir ..."; [ending mid folio, remainder and 40v blank with red staves];

ff. 41-45, Christmas Mass;

ff. 45-49v, Mass for Sts. Fabian and Sebastian (January 20);

ff. 49v-53v, Mass for the Assumption (August 15);

ff. 54-58v, [rubric, f. 53v], *Sequentia defunctorum*, incipit, "Dies ire ...";

ff. 59-64v, [rubric, f. 58v], Mass, Common of Saints, *In Natalitiis virginum*, ...;

ff. 65-69v, Mass for the Holy spirit;

ff. 69v-73v, Mass, Common of Saints, an apostle;

ff. 73v-77v, Mass, dedication of St. Michael (September 29);

ff. 77v-86, Mass, Common of Saints, martyr-*pontificis*; f. 81v, *-non pontificis*;

ff. 86-94v, Settings of the Sanctus and Agnus dei; f. 87v, *Egredimini et uidete filie syon ...*; f. 91, settings of the sanctus, Agnus dei, and Creed.

The most obvious, but also one of the most important features of this volume is that it is very big. Large Choir Books like this one were designed so that they could be read by all the members of the choir, or *schola cantorum*, at once; both the text and music would have been easily legible from a distance. Sets of large format Choir Books for the Mass and Office, often including numerous volumes, were used in churches and monasteries throughout the later Middle Ages and Renaissance. Some of the most famous examples are from fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Italy: a fourteen-volume set of Choir Books was made for the Abbey of San Sisto of the Congregation of Santa Justina in the second half of the fifteenth century; an even

larger set of thirty-three volumes was made for the cathedral in Florence in the early sixteenth century.

The texts included in this volume set it apart from these examples and make it difficult to classify. Most of its texts are those that would be found in a Gradual, the liturgical chant book that includes only the sung portions of the Mass. Included here are texts proper to a small number of feasts, as well as ordinary chants, the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus dei, sung at every Mass.

Two aspects of this volume, however, are certainly unusual. First, Graduals are usually organized according to the liturgical year, with the texts presented in three cycles, the Temporale, Sundays and the feasts celebrating the life of Christ beginning with Advent, including the movable feast of Easter and others, the Sanctorale, feasts of saints and other celebrations on fixed dates, and the Common of Saints, including Masses for general categories of saints. That pattern is not followed here, and our volume does not include the complete liturgical year. It begins with the Mass for the Invention of the Cross, celebrated on September 14, and a votive Mass in honor of the Virgin Mary, and then continues with a mixture of some Masses from the Common of Saints, with a very few selected feasts from the Temporale and Sanctorale, along with musical settings for the Ordinary texts mentioned above.

Even more unusual is the fact that for a few feasts the musical texts for the Office of Vespers are included before the Mass texts. The music for the Divine Office was almost always found in separate volumes. Liturgical volumes that include both Office texts and texts for the Mass can be found, but they are unusual. The resulting volume, although idiosyncratic, would have been usable (note that the few feasts here are arranged in the order of the calendar year), and the consistency of the script and its very regular physical structure suggest that its current contents reflect the original plan of the volume (i.e. this is not a compilation put together from unrelated manuscripts, but rather a coherent, if unusual, whole).

## LITERATURE

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