

[Choir Book] Gradual (part) or Liturgical *libellus* for the Mass
In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment with musical notation
Northern Italy, c. 1400-1440

i (modern parchment) + 40 + *i* (modern parchment) folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto, missing four leaves and an unknown number of quires at the beginning and possibly at the end (collation *i*⁶ [-1 before f. 1, presumably with loss of text, although the text on f. 1 is complete] *ii*¹² [-4, one leaf after f. 8, -7, one leaf after f. 10] *iii*² *iv*⁸ *v*⁸ [-8, one leaf after f. 32] *vi*⁸), horizontal catchwords quires 2-4, no signatures, ruling usually indiscernible, but traces of ruling in lead with double vertical bounding lines are visible on a few folios (justification 166 x 113 mm.), written in a rounded gothic book hand with five lines of text and five 4-line red staves on each page, music in square notation, red rubrics, one-line alternately red and blue initials with contrasting pen decoration in purple and red, six larger blue initials with red pen decoration (one line of text and music) on ff. 6, 17v (two), 21v, 26, 27v, two large parted red and blue initials with red and blue pen decoration equivalent to two lines of text and music on ff. 1, 4v, many folios darkened (ff. 39v, 40rv, very dark), some stains and other signs of long use, cockling, f. 6, worn with part of the text now illegible, lower corner of f. 8 torn away (some damage to text), f. 12, partially loose, f. 26, later paper repair gutter, f. 33, repair with a strip of parchment from a similar music manuscript in gutter (possibly this manuscript). Bound in lampas of silk and linen warps and silk wefts, woven in Italy, probably Florence, c. 1490-1500, adhered to pasteboards of a nineteenth-century binding, smooth spine, boards larger than the book block, some abrasion and slight fraying, particularly around the edges and the spine, boards slightly warped, with a brown fitted box, white label on spine, "Cantus Cantorum, XVème Siècle." Dimensions 228 x 163 mm.

Art from the Middle Ages can endure for centuries, but often with significant alterations. This medieval music manuscript was given new life in the nineteenth century, when it was preserved in a binding covered with fifteenth-century lampas silk of exceptional beauty. Textiles are among the rarest and most precious works of art surviving from the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Text, music, and textile, all of interest, are here combined in an object greater than the sum of its parts.

PROVENANCE

1. Written in Italy in the first half of the fifteenth century, c. 1400-1440 in Northern Italy, as suggested by the style of the script and decorated initials.
2. F. 4v, lower margin, late fifteenth- or sixteenth-century note that mentions this manuscript and Jerosimo, the rector of St. Donato: "Questo libro <?>cantar[?] e di mi Jerosimo retor di sancto donato. Ingretei comune di colligonzi"
3. Evidence of continued use from the fifteenth through the eighteenth century, including the general condition of the leaves (stains, darkening, thumbing), and additions in a number of later hands: f. 4v, "ominium sanctorum," added within the initial itself; f. 5, cursive, "domine"; ff. 18 and 35rv, "Dominicus" "R"; f. 19v, erasure, with "D..." visible; 31v, "D. <...>y a manu"; doodles or pen trials, ff. 6, 14, 24; and lower margins, in an upright, formal 18th-century(?) script (perhaps pen trials while copying these texts?): ff. 11v-12, "m spa gloria// ado"; f. 15, "g"; f. 16v, "dei"; f. 19, "dicunt"; ff. 19v-20, vultum etc. a/ g minus."

4. Inside front cover, engraved bookplate of Maurice Burrus, "Maurice Burrus. Deputé du Haut-Rhin. 1937," with "371" in pencil. Burrus (1882-1959) was an Alsatian politician and tobacco magnate. He was an avid book collector, owning many fine illuminated manuscripts, and volumes with fine bindings. He was also an avid philatelist and amassed a vast and famous collection of stamps. He acquired the manuscript in 1936 from Lauria (stickers in purple ink, back flyleaf).
5. Burrus Sale, London, Christie's, May 25, 2016, lot 26.

TEXT

ff. 1-5v, [ff. 1-4v], incipit, "Uiri galilei quid admiramini aspicientes ... celorum ad orientem aleluya"; [ff. 4v-5v], *In festo omnium sanctorum, Introitus*, incipit, "Gaudeamus omnes in domini ...: ... Gr., Timete dominum ... de est timentibus//";

Texts and musical notation for the proper of the Mass for the Ascension (complete), followed immediately on the same folio by All Saints, now ending imperfectly in the gradual, the chant sung between the Epistle and the Gospel readings.

ff. 6-10v, [Kyriale], *In minoribus duplicibus*, incipit, "Kyrie ...; Sanctus. Sanctus. [San]ctus dominus deus//"; [missing one folio following f. 8v; f. 9] "//serere nobis. Agnus dei qui tollis peccata mundi ... , Ite missa est."

ff. 9-13, [Kyriale], *In honore beate marie uirginis*, incipit, "Kyrie ...; ... Gratias agimus tibi propter magna gloriam tuam//" [missing one leaf following f. 10v; f. 11], incipit, "//cata mundi suscipe ... Cum sancto spiritu in gloria dei patris. Amen.... Ite missa est";

ff. 13-17, [Kyriale], *In dominicis diebus*, incipit, "Kyrie ...; Ite missa est";

ff. 17v-21v, [Kyriale], *In simplicibus solemnioribus*, incipit, "Kyrie ...; Ite missa est";

The Kyriale includes a group of texts that belong to the Ordinary of the Mass, but with a few seasonal variations (the Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus, and Ite missa est); here we have these texts for minor double feasts, for feasts in honor of the Virgin, for Sundays, and for solemn simple feasts. In some manuscripts the Creed is also included, but here it was copied in the section that follows. In most Graduals the Kyriale is found at the end.

ff. 21v-25v, incipit, "Credo in unum deum ...; Asperges me domine ..; *Psalmus*, incipit, Miserere mei ... misericordiam tuam [cue only]";

The Creed and "Asperges me domine" (a text sung at the beginning of Mass), are also part of the Ordinary of the Mass;

ff. 26-39v, [Mass of the Dead], *In agenda mortuorum*, incipit, "Requiem eterna ...; Libera me domine de morte eterna ... tremenda. Quando//"; [one leaf missing; f. 33], incipit, "//eternam dona ... et lux perpetua luceat ei. Libera me ...; "Conmissa mea pavesco ... Quia";

The Mass of the Dead, the inspiration for so much fine sacred music, was said at Funerals, but also on the Anniversary of Death, and other occasions of remembrance.

ff. 39v-40v, *Hec antiphonas scilicet Vidi aquam cantatur dominicis diebus*, incipit, "Vidi aquam . . ."; *Psalmus*, incipit, "Salvum me fac . . . [cue]; *V.*, Gloria benedicamus domino."

Antiphon accompanying the Asperges, said at the beginning of Mass.

BINDING

A remarkable feature of this manuscript is the binding covered with two pieces of a late fifteenth-century silk textile known as lampas, one covering the surface and edges of each board, with the division carefully concealed in the crease of the binding on the reverse, both depicting the Annunciation to the Virgin. Lampas was a costly textile with a compound structure consisting of a warp-faced ground, usually in a satin or twill weave, and supplementary or "pattern" wefts in one or more colors on top, usually in a twill weave, to form the design. This luxurious fabric was most commonly used as a trimming for ecclesiastical textiles. The quality of this example suggests they were woven in a very skilled workshop, most likely located in Florence, the leading producer of lampas silks during this period (Garrett and Reeves, 2018, no. 25). A fragment of the same design belonging to the Museo del Tessuto in Prato, Tuscany (Degl'Innocenti, 2000, p. 47; Ciatti, 1994, p. 149) indicates that this silk was once part of a vertical strip.

Mary is shown kneeling on the left, with the angel holding a lily on the right; the complex background includes a tiled floor, and glimpses of an interior behind Mary, and a garden through an open window behind the angel. The orientation of the figures and the reverse lettering of the partial inscription visible at the top ("Ave gr" from *Ave Maria Gratia plena*, Hail Mary full of grace) indicates that we are looking at the reverse, or wrong side, of the fabric; customarily the Virgin is placed to the right of the scene. The design recalls the compositions of the Florentine artists Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio and their circle, particularly the poses of the figures of the Virgin and Gabriel in the mosaic of the Annunciation to the Virgin, Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence (Peri, 1990, p. 50). It is possible that the viewing side of the fabric was worn, and the fabric was therefore reversed intentionally, or perhaps the modern bookbinder simply made an error when attaching the fabric to the boards.

This manuscript includes the words and music for parts of the Mass, contents commonly found in the liturgical volume we call a Gradual. The contents, however, especially the first two texts, pose questions to scholars. The Mass for the Ascension (complete) is followed immediately on the same folio by All Saints. These two masses do not normally occur together in liturgical manuscripts. The feast of the Ascension is movable, celebrated forty days after Easter (ie. in early May to early June), and would normally be found in the Temporale; All Saints, celebrated November 1, would be found in the Sanctorale. This suggests there must have been a special reason underlying their presence on these leaves. Perhaps these texts or, more likely, the musical settings, were versions that were new or not otherwise available to the original owners of this manuscript, and they were therefore copied together, out of their usual order (suggesting that further study of the musical settings of these texts may be of interest).

A complete Gradual, often copied as a large Choir Book, would have included texts for the Mass throughout the liturgical year. Graduals do often include a Kyrie and other texts for the Ordinary of the Mass, usually at the end of the volume. These leaves could have once formed part of a complete, relatively small-format Gradual. Alternatively, they could have been part of a small volume with specialized contents (a liturgical *libellus*), with the Masses for the Ascension and All Saints (presumably in a version not found elsewhere in their books), together with texts for the Ordinary of the Mass and the Requiem Mass copied in a small volume to keep conveniently at hand.

LITERATURE

Ciatti, M. *Drappi, velluti, taffetà et altre cose. Antichi tessuti a Siena e nel suo territorio*, Siena, 1994.

Degl'Innocenti, Daniela. *I tessuti della fede : Bordi figurati del XV e XVI secolo dalle collezioni del Museo del tessuto*, I quaderni del Museo del tessuto 1, Florence and Prato, 2000.

Garrett, R., and Reeves, M. *Late medieval and Renaissance textiles*. London, 2018.

Hiley, D. *Western Plainchant: A Handbook*, Oxford, 1993.

Hughes, A. *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to Their Organization and Terminology*, Toronto, 1982.

Huglo, M. *Les livres de chant liturgiques*, Turhout, 1988.

Palazzo, Eric. *A History of Liturgical Books from the Beginning to the Thirteenth Century*, tr. Madeleine Beaumont, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1998.

Perri, Paolo, ed. *Bordi figurati del Rinascimento*, Mostre del Museo nazionale del Bargello 17, Florence, 1990.

ONLINE RESOURCES

1961 edition of the Roman Gradual in Latin by the monks of Solesme

http://www.ccwatershed.org/media/pdfs/13/08/14/13-43-42_0.pdf

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

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

Jean-Baptiste Lebigue, *Initiation aux manuscrits liturgiques*, Paris, IRHT, 2007

<https://irht.hypotheses.org/2091>

<https://cel.archives-ouvertes.fr/cel-00194063/document>

TM 1000