

**Roman Martyrology for use at the Cistercian Spermaillie Abbey near Bruges
In Latin and Dutch, manuscript on parchment
Southern Netherlands, Bruges, 1598**

ii + 166 folios on paper, modern foliation in pencil, 1-166, complete (collation i-vi⁸ vii⁹[9, f. 57, a singleton, f. 57, became detached at some stage, and was attached to the end of the quire back-to-front, with what was once the recto of the leaf now on the verso] viii-ix⁶ x¹⁰ xi⁹ xii-xiii⁶ xiv-xv¹⁰ xvi⁴ xvii¹⁶ xviii¹² xix⁶ xx⁸), catchwords on every page, ruled in lead point (justification 205 x 140 mm.), written in black and red ink in a cursive bookhand on 18 lines, capitals highlighted in red throughout, 1-line initials and rubrics in red throughout, one 2-line initial in red in the beginning, stains and smudging, but in overall good condition. Bound in the nineteenth century in blind-tooled brown calf, clasp and catches in metal, one clasp missing, spine rubbed, front joint split, body broken. Dimensions 245 x 190 mm.

Written for and likely by women, this dated and localized manuscript is a copy of the new Roman Martyrology, mandated by the Pope in 1584. Its text offers a rare case study of the transmission of a printed work in a manuscript copy, customized for the use of the Cistercian nuns of Spermaillie Abbey where it was copied. Long use of this manuscript is reflected in the numerous changes to the text on slips of paper, including liturgical updates and the obits of the abbesses.

PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was written at the Spermaillie Abbey in Bruges by Prioress Maria in 1598, as she states in the colophon on f. 164v: "Istud martyrologium conscribi curavit donna Maria [blank space] Priorissa monasterii de Spaermail ad dei et omnium sanctorum honorem et gloriam ac decorem divini officii. Anno domini. 1598"; above the colophon is written in another hand: "Finis est impositus die xvi^a Junii anni 1599."

A Cistercian convent, Spermaillie Abbey was founded in the village of Ziezele (today Sijsele), in the outskirts of Bruges, in 1241 by Gillis van Brene, of a prestigious family originating in Hainaut, canon of St. Donat in Bruges and Chancellor of Flanders. A note about him was added in Flemish at the end of the book (f. 166).

2. Corrections to the text were added and some sections were deleted by pasting paper on top of text, indicating that the book continued to be actively used over several years, even centuries.

For example, a saint relating to local veneration was added on f. 82: "In Brabantia: Sancta Lutgardis Virginis"; additions of Cistercian saints on paper inserts include St. Stephen Harding and St. Bernard (ff. 95v-96, 16 July), and St. Malachy, who died at Clairvaux Abbey ("In territorio lingonensi [Langres] monasterio clare vallis: depositio Beati malachie Epife et confessoris," f. 142, 3 November). Obits of the abbesses of this convent were added to the specific dates of their deaths, inscribed into the margins (e.g. "Obiit domina francisca abbatissa nostra vigesima octava", f. 53), listed here starting with the first Abbess listed on f. 122v, and concluding with the thirty-sixth Abbess.

TEXT

ff. 1-164v, incipit, "*Calendis Januarii: Luna. Circumcisio domini nostre Ihesu christi. Rome Almachii martiiris qui iubente urbis prefecto cum diceret ... aliorum plurimorum sanctorum martyrum confessorum atque virginum. Laus deo*";

A manuscript copy of the "new" *Martyrologium Romanum* according to the revision of the Julian calendar of 1582 (now called the Gregorian calendar); editio princeps, Rome 1583, *Martyrologium romanum ad novam kalendarii rationem et ecclesiasticæ historiæ veritatem restitutum, Gregorii XIII pont. max. iussu editum*; the 1584 edition was approved and mandated for use by the whole church in 1584 by the council of Trent (USTC 820863, 820864, 820885, 820886, and so forth). Cesare Baronius revised and corrected edition with additional notes was published 1586; another revised edition appeared in 1589. The text in our manuscript is very close to these early editions but lacks some of the saints; a more detailed comparison of the manuscript and printed texts would be of interest.

f. 165rv, Tables providing the martyrological letters, golden numbers and epacts from October 15, 1582 until the end of 1699 (table on f. 165) and from 1700 until the end of 1899 (table on f. 165v);

The same tables appear in the 1584 edition in the prefatory material before p. 1, *Tabella litterarum Martyrologii respondentium aureis numeris ...*, 1582-1699; 1700-1899 (the printed edition also includes 1900-2199, not found in our manuscript).

f. 166, [Note about the founder of the convent, Gillis van Brene, added in another hand in Flemish], incipit, "Item maister gillis van brene een proust van haerlebecke canonick van sint donaes binnen brugge cancellier van vlanderen fondateur van desen closter geheeten nyewe fernsalem welc men heet spaermaellen de welke starf int faer dusent et honclert ende senenticht faer den fufsten dach in december"; [f. 166v, blank].

Obits of the abbesses of Spermaillie Abbey are added throughout the text: (1) Diabela, f. 122v; (2) Agatha, f. 147v; (3) Maria, f. 106v; (4) Catharina, f. 136; (5) Catharina, f. 147v; (6) Adeliza, f. 40; (7) Catharina, f. 161; (8) Elizabeth, f. 26v; (9) Gertrudis, f. 127; (10) Volquidis, f. 52; (11) Beatrix, f. 19; (12) Lutgardis, f. 84; (13), Cecilia, f. 150; (14) Guilielma, f. 142; (16) Margareta, f. 19v; (17) Margareta, f. 147v; (18) Jacoba, f. 135v; (19) Maria, f. 155; (20) Judoca, f. 25; (21) Margareta, f. 31; (22) Francisca, f. 135; (23) Jacoba, f. 28; (24) Elizabeth, f. 108; (25) Johanna, f. 158v; (26) Catharina, f. 150; (27) Anna, f. 90; (28) Francisca, f. 53; (29) Maria, f. 33v; (30) Ludovica, f. 132v; (31) Catharina, f. 163; (32) Bernarde, f. 138; (33) Theresia, f. 94v; (34) Bernarda, f. 20; (35) Eugenia, f. 134; (36), Maria Theresia, f. 135v.

The Martyrology is a liturgical book announcing day by day, following the order of the calendar, the saints to that are to be commemorated. It was read daily in monastic chapter after the service of Prime. Chapter was the morning assembly, deriving from the habit of convening for the reading of a chapter of the Bible, or of the order's rule. One of the nuns (or monks) began this capitular service by announcing from the pulpit the date according to the Roman calendar, as well as the age of the moon. She (or he) would then read the appropriate section from the Martyrology, followed by obits and anniversaries. The meeting would continue with further readings and prayers, before the nuns or monks would depart to their individual tasks for the day.

The entry for each day in our manuscript, as in the printed editions, begins with the martyrological letters indicating the moon's age. The date according to the Roman calendar, which employs the system of kalends, nones and ides, follows. The new moon was the day of the kalends, the moon's first quarter was the day of the nones, and the ides fell on the day of the full moon. The first day of the month was the kalends. Thus, the first entry in the manuscript is for "Calendis Januarii" (f. 1). The second day of January is (ante diem) "Quarto nonas Januarii" (f. 1v), the third is (ante diem) "Tertio nonas Januarii" (f. 2), the fourth is "Pridie nonas Januarii" (f. 2v), the fifth is "Nonis Januarii" (f. 3), and so on. After the date are listed the various saints commemorated on that date, often with very brief descriptions of their lives.

The Roman Martyrology is the official complete text of the martyrology of the Catholic Church. It is based on a long history of works on Christian saints that extends from the oldest martyrology, the Martyrologium Hieronymianum, composed in the middle of the fifth century in northern Italy, to versions of the text by Bede, Florus of Lyon and Adon of Vienne, to name the principal authors. Adon's text was abbreviated by the monk Usuard of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris around 875, and it was this text that was used throughout the Middle Ages.

Martyrologies are the best sources of information on the cult of the saints; this copy of the printed Roman Martyrology was adapted by the nuns of Spermaillie to reflect their actual liturgical customs, and as such will repay careful study. Physically, the volume is also of interest: the quires are very unequal in size; the script is clear, easy to read and regular throughout; it is quite large and in a fine (recent) binding that opens well for close study. This is an important artifact both as an example of a manuscript copied from a printed exemplar, and as a "living book" updated by its users for generations.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

USTC (Universal Short Title Catalogue)

<https://www.ustc.ac.uk/index.php>

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