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Ordo Secundum Consuetudinem Romane Curie ad Ungendum Infirmum, etc. (Use of Rome)

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
[Italy, Rome ? fourteenth century, with later additions]

88 leaves (i¹⁰, ii⁸, iii⁵ with repositioned endleaf, iv¹², v¹⁰, vi⁴ plus 2, vii-viii¹², ix¹³ of which xiii a singleton), lacking leaves at least after f. 18 and before f. 64, litany on ff. 20-23v in two columns of 23 lines, otherwise up to 20 lines written in black between two verticals and up to 21 horizontals (justification varies), rubrics in red, capitals touched red, one- and two-line initials of red and blue, approximately one-half the leaves containing music, with square notation on a four-line red stave, one large blue initial with flourishing of red and blue, full-page border with saints and confronted beasts added to opening folio, 1 miniature, and 4 figures added to margins or spaces originally blank (worn, darkened, many gutters reinforced with strips from notarial documents). CONTEMPORARY BINDING of old brown leather over thick wooden boards, upper cover with 8 or 9 bosses and brass catch, lower cover with 2 of 9 bosses, pastedown inside upper cover part of a twelfth-century Italian Gradual with neumes, pastedown inside lower cover from a fifteenth-century Italian legal document, scuffed and stained, small losses. Dimensions 233 x 168 mm.

Intact medieval book containing the text and music for the Roman Ritual—extreme unction, baptism, various benedictions—with charming added (?) illustrations and in an original binding including a very early, possibly important musical pastedown with neumes.

PROVENANCE:

1. Made for a priest, it specifies the ritual for administering sacraments and performing other services in the cure of souls. The opening rubric identifies it as for the liturgical Use of Rome, and the Office of the Dead is closer to the Use of Rome than any other published us, differing only in the response to the third lesson.

2. Perhaps modified pictorially in the nineteenth century.
3. Sale, London, Sotheby's 14 April 1924, lot 166b.
4. Purchased Maggs Bros., London, 19 August 1943; donated to Saint Mary's of the Barrens, Perryville, Missouri, November 1943.
5. The Countesse Estelle Doheny Collection, New York, Christie's, 14 December 2001, lot 7.

TEXT

The text is that of the *Rituale* or *Ordo consuetudinum romane curie*:

ff. 1-12v, Extreme Unction; Rubric *Ordo secundum consuetudine ...*;

ff. 13-18v, Commendation of the souls (incomplete at the end); Rubric, *Oratio commendationis anime ...*;

ff. 20-23v, Litany;

ff. 24-63v, Office of the Dead; Rubric, *Incipit officium per defunctorum ...*;

ff. 64-76v, Baptism (lacking the beginning), begins "... ysaac autem genuit iacob ...";

ff. 77-88, Benedictions; Rubric, *Iste sunt letanie que debent ...* (with Laurence and Constantine in the litanies);

One of the official books of the Roman rite the *Ritual* contains the services performed by the priest that are not in the *Missal* and *Breviary*. The priests offices, such as baptism, penance, matrimony, extreme unction, were originally contained in little handbooks, which were united eventually in the *Ritual*. Existing *Rituals* display considerable textual differences, and there was not a uniform book before 1614, when Paul V published the first edition of the official *Ritual*.

ILLUSTRATION

The subjects of the illuminations are as follows:

f. 1, full-page border with standing figures of Christ and a saint at lower corners, a central medallion with a seated ? Carthusian saint and, at the upper corners, medallions with two bust-length saints;

f. 20, a bird perched on a tree, between the columns of text;

f. 33v, marginal figure of a peasant balanced on rocky ground having let fly an arrow;

f. 51v, miniature with an enthroned monk handing the monastic rule to a group of monks, with a banner with the Crucifixion (contemporary ?);

f. 75v, marginal figure of a standing man, his head bandaged, holding his nose and pointing;

f. 78v, marginal figure of the Virgin holding a pair of scales.

The decoration of such books is customarily restricted to flourished initials, and this may originally have been the case with the present manuscript. Then, perhaps in the nineteenth century, it was provided with exotically archaic illumination combining Romanesque-style figures with beast and foliate decoration of Moorish appearance. The figures and scenes were supplied with no thought to their suitability to the text but to make a handsomely written, but serviceable, artefact into an attractive thoroughly medieval artwork.

LITERATURE

Thalhofer, *Handbuch der kath. Liturgik*, II, Freiburg, 1893, pp. 509-36.

Online Resources

The Roman Ritual translated by Philip T. Weller, STD
<http://www.ewtn.com/library/PRAYER/ROMAN2.TXT>