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**Noted Offices for Franciscan Nuns  
In Latin and German, illustrated manuscript on parchment  
[North Germany, c. 1550]**

*iv paper + 80 folios with original foliation + seventeenth-century addition of 8 leaves + ii paper, complete (collation i6, ii-iv4, v-x10), 17 lines written in black ink in a regular bastarda between two verticals and 19 horizontals faintly ruled in metal point (justification 112 x 82 mm.), or in five lines below five four-line staves ruled in red for music of a square notation, rubrics in red, text capitals touched red, one- and two-line initials in red, large initials in black decorated in red, ONE ILLUMINATED FULL-BORDER CUT and SEVEN HAND-COLORED CUTS pasted in and framed in silver and red: 17th-century addition: 10-15 lines written in black ink in a Roman script within a rectangular frame ruled in black (red of fore-edges has stained the top of a few leaves). Contemporary (or perhaps later 16<sup>th</sup> century) brown calf over wooden boards, paneled in blind, remains of fore-edge clasps (covers and first paper quire detached, 19th-century rebacking worn). Dimensions 160 x 115 mm.*

Neatly executed "hybrid" manuscript, perhaps "nun's work," for an unidentified German convent of the sisters of the Order of the Poor Clares. The pasted-in hand-colored engravings not only appear to be otherwise unknown but they present an interesting iconography of the female Franciscans, including the "ladder of virtues." The manuscript warrants further study in the context of the sixteenth-century revitalization of Franciscan foundations and the insertion of prints in manuscripts even a century after the invention of printing.

**PROVENANCE**

1. The book was made for, and perhaps by, a Poor Clare, a nun of the Second Order of Saint Francis, in Germany in a convent that had a chapel of St Michael, f.37v. It is titled for those "den heiligen orden unser aller heiligsten mueter S. Clara," on f. 1. The litany invokes Saints Francis and Clara as "father" and "mother" respectively. Founded by Saint Clare, with the approval of Saint Francis, the Order was revitalized by the reforming movements of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Without further comparative data (similar text, woodcuts, coloration) or the chance discovery of a single convent with a chapel dedicated to Saint Michael, it seems virtually impossible to identify the actual convent of the Poor Clares for which this book was made, since 64 convents of this order are known in Germany from this time period.

2. Collects were added on the final parchment leaves which had been left blank. These include a prayer for Charles and Elizabeth, King and Queen of France, i.e. Charles IX, (d. 1574) who married Elizabeth, daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II, in 1570.

3. Richard Douglass Fisher, Baltimore (1834-1910), his engraved bookplate inside upper cover; presumably his notes on second paper leaf; a letter of 1903 addressed to him about the book pasted to paper leaf at end, giving (wrongly) a fourteenth century date for the manuscript.

## TEXT

ff. 1-18, Title, "Her nach volgt die ordinnung wie ein andechtige junckfraw in den heilligen orden user aller heiligisten mueter St. Clara ..."; followed by Office for the clothing of a novice; incipit, Erstlich wan das gottlich amytt volpracht ist so weischt man das geistlich klaidt ...";

ff. 18v-23v, Office for the veiling of a sister; incipit, "Her nach volgt die ordnung wie man ein schwester weillen ...";

ff. 24-34, Office for a sick sister; incipit, "Her nach volgt wan man der siechen schwester die heilligshait wil geben ...";

ff. 34-37v, Office for a dying sister; incipit, "Her nach volgt die ordnung we nein schwestern auss den todt ...";

ff. 37-77, Office for a sister's burial; incipit, "Her nach volgt die ordnung wie man die verstorbnne schwester sol in sant Michaels capellen tragen ...";

ff. 77v-80, added prayers (in a slightly later hand).

ff. 81-91, (added paper leaves), Prayers and rites for a dead nun;

ff. 91v-93, Index to contents of whole book

ff. 93v-94, ruled blanks.

Throughout the rubrics are in German with words of rites in Latin.

## ILLUSTRATION

The subjects of the hand-colored prints are as follow:

f. 4, St Regina;

f. 19v, Dominican nun kneeling before the enthroned Christ Child, two music-making angels standing on either side;

f. 24, Procession with priest carrying the host, titled "Die himlisch Procession";

f. 35v, Angel directs gaze of dying nun from the crucifix, held by one of group of sisters, to Christ and the Virgin, title below "Tobet Gott alle zeitt/ Der Dott. Ist uns bereit";

f. 41, Descent from the Cross;

f. 49v, Nun ascends a ladder of titled virtues to reach the Christ Child; a banderole next to the nun gives the opening of the prayer for the hours "Meus (sic?) in adiutorum meum intende," and the Christ Child responds "Meni sponsa Christi accipe coronam"; the titles of the virtues are given in ascending order: "humilitas," "paupertae," "castitas," "paciencia," "fides," "spes," "caritas."

f. 60v, Last Judgment, the number "32" visible at the bottom center.

f. 76, full border of flowers, birds, a squirrel and a butterfly on a ground of liquid gold, engraved, hand-colored and pasted in.

The practice of pasting woodcuts and engravings into manuscripts, known from the mid-fifteenth century, was particularly common in religious houses. Some prints were indeed deliberately aimed at male and female religious, as were three in this book. Others required more ingenuity: the print of St. Regina, martyred with Saint Ursula and the other 10,999 virgins, is used here to represent any bride of Christ. It is notable that the prints included here correspond closely to the accompanying text. Their inscription and coloring may well have been done by members of the convent, since many houses produced books for their own use and commercially to generate income. The persistence of the manuscript as the form this codex took should not be surprising, because such noted offices, like other music manuscripts, were highly individualized for specific foundations and, so, printing would have been uneconomical because of the inevitably small number of copies.

Recent excellent studies on the practice of inserting prints in manuscripts unfortunately stop short of the sixteenth century, but further study of this and related manuscripts make an interesting topic for future research (e.g., see below Areford, Weekes, Parshall and Schoch).

## LITERATURE

Areford, David. "In the Viewer's Hands: The Reception of the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe, c. 1400 - c. 1500," PhD. Thesis, Northwestern University, 2002.

Hamburger, Jeffrey. *Nuns as Artists. The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (California Studies in the History of Art, 37), Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ London, 1997.

Hamburger, Jeffrey and Robert Suckale et al. *Krone und Schleier. Kunst aus Mittelalterlichen Frauenklöstern*, Essen/ Bonn, 2005 (catalogue of an exhibition).

Landau, David and Peter Parshall. *The Renaissance Print 1470-1550*, London and New Haven, 1994.

Parshall, Peter and Rainer Schoch et al. *Origins of European Printmaking: Fifteenth-century Woodcuts and their Public*, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art in association with Yale University Press, New Haven, 2005 (catalogue of an exhibition).

Weekes, Ursula. *Early Engravers and their Public: the Master of the Berlin Passion and Manuscripts from Convents in the Rhine-Maas Region, ca. 1450-1500*. Turnhout, Harvey Miller, 2004.

#### ONLINE RESOURCES

Convents of the Poor Clares in Germany

<http://franwomen.sbu.edu/franwomen/convents.aspx?CylID=4>