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**FERIAL PSALTER (Use of the Celestines)**  
**In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment**  
**Southern France, Avignon?, c. 1450**

92 ff., complete (although perhaps missing its calendar), with a few leaves misbound (ff. 82-87), in regular gatherings of 8 [collation: i-xii<sup>8</sup>], catchwords, contemporary foliation in red in upper right-hand corner in Roman numerals (for proper sequence, best to follow contemporary foliation rather than modern pencil numbering), some quire signatures, written in a small cursive gothic bookhand, on up to 24 long lines, ruled in light red ink (justification 67 x 50 mm), prickings still visible, rubrics in red, some paragraph marks in blue, some parti-colored decorative line-fillers in blue and red, numerous versals in red or blue, numerous 2-line high initials in red or blue, 3- to 4-line high parti-colored initials in red and blue (marking important text breaks), larger 10-line high opening initial parti-colored in blue and liquid gold, with infill of red and violet filigree penwork, text of first folio set in a decorated page with full border decoration composed of colored arabesque and acanthus motifs in blue and liquid gold, highlighted with red and violet filigree penwork. Bound in a modern rigid vellum hollandaise binding, smooth spine (Some leaves with faded ink, although text still legible). Dimensions 105 x 80 mm.

Small pocket-size Ferial Psalter explicitly made for the use of the Celestines, although further comparative research remains necessary to determine exact origin. A full study of the libraries of the Celestines has not yet been undertaken, but it is clear that manuscripts from the Order are relatively rare (Leroquais lists only nine Psalters). Although the Celestines enjoyed important expansion in Italy, there were only little over twenty convents in France at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Order was favored by French royal and pontifical patronage.

**PROVENANCE**

Copied and decorated for the use of the Celestines, as stated in the opening rubric (f. 1): "Incipit psalterium secundum usum fratrum celestinorum ordinis sancti benedicti", and again in the rubric introducing the Seven Penitential Psalms (f. 81). This is confirmed by the presence in the Litany of the founder of the order, Saint Peter Celestine (f. 87v), as well as a number of other venerated saints such as Martial, Benedict (Celestines followed the Benedictine Rule), Onufrius. The colophon unfortunately does not reveal for which convent this Psalter was destined. Style of decoration and script suggest a Southern France has a possible region of production for this manuscript, with a decorated opening leaf that resembles manuscripts produced in Provence, perhaps Avignon or nearby Sorgues where there were Celestine foundations.

An added unidentified number in Roman numerals has been copied on f. 1 (perhaps a later shelfmark): "CCMXXIV".

## TEXT

ff 1-74, Ferial Psalter (Use of the Celestines), rubric, *Incipit psalterium secundum usum fratrum celestinorum ordinis sancti benedicti. Feria secunda ad primam psalmus primus*; incipit Psalm 1: "Beatus vir..."; ending with Psalm 150, incipit, "Laudate domine...";

ff. 74-80, Canticles for the Benedictine Office and Hymns;

ff. 80-81, Athanasian Creed, rubric, *Simbolum Athansii...*;

ff. 81-81v, Seven Penitential Psalms, rubric, *Incipit septem psalmi penitentiales secundum usum celestinorum ordinis sancti benedicti*;

ff. 81v and ff. 87-87v, ff. 86-86v (misbound), Kyrie and Litany, with noteworthy saints: Martial (f. 87); Peter Celestine [Pietro Morrone or Del Murrone, Pope Celestine V (1294-1296), canonized in 1313] (f. 87v); Benedict (f. 87v); Onufrius (fol. 87v); Macarius (f. 87v); Omnes sancti monachi et heremite (f. 87v); Scholastica (f. 87v);

ff. 85-85v and f. 84 (misbound), Prayers for the Dead, rubric, *In agenda mortuorum ad vespas antiphona*;

ff. 84-84v, ff. 83-83v, ff. 82-82v and f. 89v (misbound, but nonetheless complete), Office of the Dead, use of the Celestines, rubric, *Incipiunt vigilie mortuorum. Invitatorium*; with readings: (1) Credo quod; (2) Qui Lazarum; (3) Domine quando; (4) Heu mihi; (5) Ne recorderis; (6) Peccante mihi; (7) Domine secundum; (8) Qui consolabatur; (9) Libera me;

ff. 89-92, Short Office for the Virgin Mary, rubric, *Sequens officium dicitur in honorem beate marie virginis qualibus feria sexta prius complectorm diei, antiphona, Benedicta tu*; incipit, "O beata virgo maria..."; rubric, *In vigilia nativitatis beate marie...*; explicit, "[...] Concede nos famulos... et eterna perfrui leticia. P. x. do. no. Amen";

f. 92v, blank.

Small portable Psalter made for use within the Celestine Order, as clearly stated in the opening rubric (f. 1), and again in the rubric announcing the Seven Penitential Psalms (f. 81). Apparently, there is no textual precision as to which monastery this manuscript was originally copied for and one must turn to stylistic comparisons to provide a better identification of its place of production and early use. Based on script and decoration, we suggest tentatively a place of origin in Southern France, perhaps Saint-Pierre-Celestin et Saint-Pierre Luxembourg d'Avignon where there was an important Celestine foundation, founded in 1393, or Saint-Martial de Gentilly [near Sorgues, Vaucluse], also close by, founded in 1356 (see Comte, 1996). Both Saints Peter Celestine and Martial are found in the Litany (respectively f. 87v and 87). One might note also that the Church of Saint-Martial in Avignon was located in the vicinity of the Convent of Saint-Pierre-Celestin.

In his seminal census of Psalters in French national holdings, V. Leroquais (1940) signals only some nine (9) Psalters made for the use of the Celestines, and amongst those Psalters, there are four that were copied for the more specific use of the Celestines of Avignon (these are Leroquais, 1940-1941, vol. I, no. 49, 50, 51 and 52, all in the Bibliothèque municipale of Avignon), and another for the closely located convent of Saint-Martial-de Gentilly (Leroquais, 1940-1941, vol. I, no. 61, Avignon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 188). The manuscripts belonging to libraries of the Celestine Order (mostly Paris) are discussed in L. Delisle, *Cabinet des manuscrits...*, II, pp. 248-251. There have been a few local studies on various Celestine convents, in France and in Italy, some addressing issues concerning book production and Celestine libraries. A very succinct list of Celestine manuscript material has been conducted and published by O. Antonini (1997), listing manuscripts of Celestine interest or origin held in French holdings, including a few liturgical manuscripts. But there has been no complete study of the liturgy and the specifics of Celestine liturgical manuscripts, which would include Psalters for Celestine use.

The Order of the Celestines owes its name and foundation to St Peter Celestine or Pietro del Murrone, later Pope Celestine V (c. 1215-1296) who is remembered as the only pope who abdicated. Pietro del Murrone retreated to live as a hermit in a cave on the Monte Murrone, and in 1263 the foundation was imposed the Rule of Saint Benedict by Pope Urban IV and the new Benedictine congregation was definitely organized in 1275. The movement quickly expanded in Central and Southern Italy and in 1280 the community comprised some 36 houses. Philip the Fair, King of France introduced the order in France circa 1300. The mother house of the French branch of the Order was founded by King Charles V in Paris, Notre-Dame de l'Annonciation. By 1400, the order had as many as 96 houses in Italy and 21 in France.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Introduction to liturgical manuscripts: "Celebrating the Liturgy's Books"

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