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**Liturgical Psalter from Gertrudenberg (Benedictine Use)  
In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment  
Northwestern Germany (Osnabrück), c. 1470-1500**

236 + i (parchment) folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, top, outer corner (collation, i<sup>10</sup> ii-iv<sup>8</sup> v<sup>6</sup>, vi<sup>10</sup> vii<sup>12</sup> [-1, f. 57, added after 6] viii<sup>14</sup> ix<sup>5</sup> [structure uncertain] x<sup>24</sup> xi<sup>8</sup> xii<sup>24</sup> xiii<sup>6</sup> xiv<sup>26</sup> xv-xix<sup>8</sup> xx<sup>24</sup> [+2 leaves, ff. 235-236, added at end]), text and initial missing before f. 27 suggests a quire was removed before quire 4, no catchwords or signatures, ruling indiscernible (justification 63 x 45 mm.), written below the top line in a well-formed hybrida script in nineteen long lines, one-line initials, alternately red and blue, within the line of the text, two-line initials, undecorated, alternately red and blue, at the beginning of the line, one initial formed by three-dimensional acanthus in pale shades of violet and pink, FIFTEEN HISTORIATED INITIALS, with 6-line pale blue initials highlighted by curling three-dimensional acanthus in shades of blue and violet, and 5-line red initials with curling acanthus in shades of orange with silver highlights, alternating, both with violet pen decoration forming a box around the initial (subjects described below), and ONE CONTEMPORARY WOODCUT, pasted in, f. 26v; in excellent condition, with some cockling. Preserved in its original binding of the fifteenth-century in brown leather over wooden boards with a slight bevel which extends beyond the book block, panel-stamped in blind, on the front cover, measuring 72 x 47 mm., St. Roche, in a traveling robe, with his dog, lettered "Sancte Roche Ora," in an arched compartment set into a rectangle of double fillets, and an outer border of triple fillets (see Weale, 1894-98, pp. 190-191, no. 401, Fogelmark, 1990, plate XIIIa, and E. Ph. Goldschmidt, 1928, no. 72, XXXII., from Cologne 1510), lower board, measuring 73 x 47 mm., two circular medallions of a lion rampant and a pelican, with smaller stamps of the Holy Lamb and Double-eagle displayed, lettered "Ihesus: Maria" and "Respice finem" (see Weale, 1894-98, p. 161, no. 299, and Fogelmark, 1990, p. 191); once fastened back to front, decorative metal clasp, lower board, and two catches, upper board, spine with four raised bands and head and tail bands; covers are worn, and damaged around the missing clasp on the lower board, spine worn and with two large cracks (The St. Roche panel was widely used by binders the Netherlands and England, including Maastricht and Ghent [see Fogelmark, 1990, p. 144], but it was also used in Germany [see Goldschmidt, cited above]). Dimensions 101 x 68 mm.

This is a very attractive small Psalter made for the Benedictine Nuns at Gertrudenberg in Osnabrück in Lower Saxony. Whereas many of the extant books from this house are in German, this manuscript, in contrast, is a formal Latin Psalter with lovely historiated initials. Especially noteworthy is the unusual iconography, with the major divisions of the Psalter illustrated by portraits of various saints, as well as the original panel-stamped binding. Only one manuscript from Gertrudenberg is listed in the Schoenberg database.

## PROVENANCE

1. The evidence in the calendar clearly indicates that this Psalter was copied for the House of Benedictine Nuns of Gertrudenberg in Osnabrück in Lower Saxony. The feasts are graded and, following monastic use, twelve lessons are to be read on important feasts. The feast of St. Benedict on March 21 is ranked "summum maius," and his Commemoration, July 11, is also in red, and ranked "summum minus." The feast of Gertrude of Nivelles on March 17 and the feast of Crispinus and Crispinianus on October 25 are also ranked "summum maius." The Abbey of Gertrudenberg was a Benedictine foundation dedicated to St. Gertrude; Crispinus and Crispinianus were venerated as minor patrons at Osnabrück. The feast of St. Anne, the mother of Mary, is included in the calendar (in red, "summum maius"), on 16 August, a distinctive date found in other manuscripts from Gertrudenberg. It is however interesting that although feasts for the commemoration of the brothers and sisters of the order are included in the calendar, masculine forms are used throughout in prayers.

The script and style of decoration suggest a date c. 1470-1500; the calendar, it may be noted, is very conservative, and lacks many of the feasts added to the liturgy in the fifteenth century. Gertrudenberg was founded in the second half of the twelfth century, and suppressed in 1803. The foundation appears to have fallen on hard times by the fifteenth century, but it was revitalized under the reform directed by the Abbess Jutteldis von Bayern from Herzebroch in 1475. Most of the surviving manuscripts from Gertrudenberg date from after this reform. Surviving manuscripts are described in Udo Kühne, et al., 1993 (thirteen manuscripts with sure or possible provenance), and Helmar Härtel, 1999 (MSS nr. 1998,7 and 3935). See also Sigrid Krämer and Michael Bernhard, *Handschriftenerbe des deutschen Mittelalters*, Munich, 1989-1990, 2:643.

2. f. 1, round stamped ex libris, "Ex libris C. C. Besla<r?>e";
3. Inside front cover, "1911, Natan [sic] Rosenthal"; description from a German dealer, laid in, mentions the manuscript was in the possession of Nathan Rosenthal in 1905;
4. Probably sold by Karl and Faber, May 11, 1971, Catalog 126, no. 17 (see Schoenberg Database, no. 24425);
5. Inside front cover, in pencil, "25," "Psalterium" and "Mi 68," in pen; front cover, small paper label, "420"; f. 1, in pencil: "7804-204."

## TEXT

ff. 1-11v [ff. 1-2, blank], ff. 3-8v, Graded calendar in red and black including "Commemoratio abbatum et abbatissarum" (7 January), Maurus, in red, twelve lessons (15 January), Anthony, in red, twelve lessons (17 January), "Commemoratio fratrum et sororum" (7 February), Scholastica, in red, duplex minus (10 February), "Commemoratio fundatorum" (3 March), Gregory, in red, duplex maius (12 March), Gertrude of Nivelles, in red, summum maius (17 March), Benedict, in red, summum maius (21 March), "Commemoratio fundatorum" (7 April), "Commemoratio fratrum et sororum" (4 May), Pancras (12 May), Servatius (13 May), Boniface, in red, twelve lessons (5 June),

"Commemoratio benefactorum" (6 June), Albanus (21 June), 10,000 martyrs (22 June), Ulric (4 July), Kilian (8 July), Commemoration of St. Benedict, in red, summum minus (11 July), Panthaleon (28 July), "Commemoratio fratrum et sororum" (4 August), Anne, mother of Mary (16 August), Augustine, in red, duplex maius (28 August), "Commemoratio benefactorum" (3 September), Magnus (6 September), Lampert (17 September), Leodegar (2 October), Gereon (10 October), Gallus (16 October), 11,000 Virgins, medium, in red (21 October), Severus (22 October), Severinus (23 October), Crispinus and Crispianus, in red, duplex maius (25 October), Willibrord (7 November), and Othmar (16 November); ff. 9-10v, Table of Psalms for different feasts, and rules for finding the Sundays in Lent [f. 11rv, blank];

ff. 12-25v, Prayers and other texts to accompany Psalms read for specific occasions; Psalms are given by cues only; *Psalterium in quadragesima pro peccatis, ante psalmis*, incipit, "Nostris malis offendimus tuam deus...", f. 13, *Psalterium de passione domini*..., f. 16v, *Psalterium pro defunctis*..., f. 18 [f. 19rv, is blank, but text is continuous, f. 18v to f. 20], *Psalterium de beata virgine in annunciatione*..., f. 24, *Psalterium de beata anna*.... [ff. 25v-26, blank; f. 26v, Woodcut of the Flight into Egypt, glued in];

ff. 27-201v, Liturgical Psalter in biblical order with antiphons, versicles, prayers, and capitulum, beginning imperfectly at Psalm 9:24, inc. "///in desiderii anime sue ....";

ff. 201v-219v, Gallican Canticles [see James Mearns. *The Canticles of the Christian Church, Eastern and Western, in Early and Medieval Times*, Cambridge, 1914, p. 60, this manuscript with nos. 1-11 and 15];

ff. 220-222v, Hymns at lauds and vespers;

ff. 223-236v, Prayers for various feasts, beginning with the second Sunday after Epiphany, and continuing through the Temporale, followed by the Common of the Saints, and the Sanctorale [f. 236v blank].

The weekly recital of the 150 Psalms was the heart of the Divine Office, the daily cycle of prayers sung in common by members of the religious orders. In this manuscript the Psalms are copied in the order of the Bible, but are accompanied by the prayers and other texts that are part of the liturgical Offices, as well as by a liturgical calendar, hymns, and prayers. The liturgical practices reflect those of a monastic house, rather than the shorter offices characteristic of the secular clergy, including the Friars, the Augustinians and other Canons. In particular note that important feasts are observed with twelve lessons (secular use would specify nine). The particular divisions of the Psalter marked by the historiated initials also particular to monastic use (Psalm 20, Sunday matins; Psalm 26, Sunday matins, second nocturn; Psalm 32, feria ii; Psalm 38, feria ii, second nocturn; Psalm 45, feria iii; Psalm 52, feria iii, second nocturn; Psalm 59, feria iv; Psalm 68, feria iv, second nocturn; Psalm 73, feria v; Psalm 79, feria v, second nocturn; Psalm 85, feria vi (acanthus decoration); Psalm 95, feria vi, second nocturn; Psalm 101 Sabbato; Psalm 105, Sabbato, second nocturn; Psalm 109, vespers).

## ILLUMINATION

Fifteen historiated initials mark the major liturgical divisions according to monastic use (see above); the subjects are depicted on burnished gold grounds with very small facial features, notably black dot-like eyes, and are depicted in shades of rose, deep blue, violet, black, often with touches of bright green and orange. Although very small, the initials are attractive and carefully executed.

Subjects as follows:

- f. 38v, Psalm 20, Virgin and Child, with Mary seated, crowned, in rose robes and deep blue mantle, holding Jesus, who is unclothed; with a crescent moon beneath Mary's chair;
- f. 44v, Psalm 26, St. Michael? dressed in white robes, holding a standard, accompanied by a dragon;
- f. 52, Psalm 32, John the Baptist holding the lamb;
- f. 63, Psalm 38, male saint, half-length, holding a book and staff;
- f. 72, Psalm 45, male saint, kneeling with a book;
- f. 80, Psalm 52, St. Andrew and his cross;
- f. 87, Psalm 59, St. Bartholomew holding his flaying knife;
- f. 97, Psalm 68, St. Sebastian in armor holding two arrows;
- f. 105v, Psalm 73, St. Benedict in black habit with a crosier and book (the Rule);
- f. 117, Psalm 79, youthful female saint with a sword (St. Catherine?);
- f. 135v, Psalm 95, St. Barbara with tower;
- f. 140, Psalm 101, female Benedictine saint in black habit with staff (St. Gertrude?);
- f. 149, Psalm 105, St. Agnes with lamb;
- f. 158v, Psalm 109, St. Apollonia holding pincers with a tooth;
- f. 201v, Canticles, female saint with staff.

Overall, this manuscript is characterized by an elegant restraint. Most of the numerous initials are devoid of penwork and work harmoniously with the well-spaced, very legible hybrida script. The small, but finely painted historiated initials, rendered with considerable detail, that mark the important liturgical divisions, punctuate this rather sober practicality. The depiction of saints in the historiated initials used to mark the liturgical divisions is a departure from the usual iconography of medieval Psalters, which include scenes from the life of King David (cf. Beaune,

Bibliothèque municipale, MS 64, a thirteenth-century Psalter from northern France, although certainly unrelated, also depicts saints in its initials; Leroquais, *Psautiers*, pp. 73-75 no. 64).

Since most of the surviving manuscripts from Gertrudenberg are not illuminated, this is a manuscript of special interest to historians interested in books from convents in this region of Germany. A close comparison between this manuscript, another in Hannover, Kestner Museum, MS 1998,7, which is a Diurnal from 1523, and the Diurnal sold at Christie's, July 9, 2001, lot 31 (Schoenberg database, no. 31857; previous sales, nos. 287 and 31644), would be of considerable interest. The ex-Christie's Diurnal, dated 1510, is also illuminated with 12 historiated initials.

The manuscript also includes a contemporary woodcut of the Flight into Egypt pasted onto f. 26v: the woodcut has been trimmed, excluding the background and leaving only Joseph, the donkey, and Mary holding the infant Jesus; cf. Wilhelm Schreiber, *Handbuch der Holz- und Metalschnitte des XV Jahrhunderts*, Leiden, 1926-30, p. 45, nos. 123 and 124, and M. J. Schretlen, *Dutch and Flemish Woodcuts of the Fifteenth Century*, London, 1925, plate 50A, from *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden*, Antwerp, 1492 by Gerard Leeu.

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Introduction to liturgical manuscripts:

"Celebrating the Liturgy's Books":

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

"Psalms," New Catholic Encyclopedia:

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12533a.htm>

Osnabrück (official website, with brief history of the city):

<http://www.osnabrueck.de/25374.asp>

Frauenklöster in Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Literatur, Dominikanerinnen:

<http://www.frauenkloester.de/>

Monastic Matrix: A scholarly resource for the study of women's religious communities from 400 to 1600 c.e.:

<http://monasticmatrix.usc.edu/>

Gertrudenberg (Monastic Matrix, community id. 2870):

<http://monasticmatrix.usc.edu/monasticon/?function=detail&id=2870>

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