

**Prayerbook (Use of Premonstratensian Canons)**  
**In Latin, with additions in Dutch, decorated manuscript on paper**  
**Low Countries, c. 1480-1500**

*i* (lifted parchment pastedown) + 286 + *i* (lifted parchment pastedown) folios on paper, watermark, angular letter P, made with two lines, no added motif, cross over vertical stroke, very common, similar to Piccard 108214 and 108215, Antwerp 1494, 108229, Antwerp 1488, 108377, Cologne 1485, 108381, Cleve 1486, 108179, Xanten 1495, and so forth, modern foliation in pencil, top outer corner recto, 1-283, followed by three blank, unnumbered leaves, complete (collation, *i*<sup>14</sup> *ii*<sup>2</sup> *iii*<sup>16</sup> *iv*<sup>10</sup> *v-vi*<sup>16</sup> *vii*<sup>12</sup> *viii-x*<sup>16</sup> *xi-xii*<sup>12</sup> *xiii-xvii*<sup>16</sup> *xviii*<sup>12</sup> [-7, cancelled with no loss of text] *xix*<sup>8</sup> *xx*<sup>16</sup> *xxi*<sup>8</sup> *xxii*<sup>8</sup> [+1, f. 283] *xxiii*<sup>6</sup> [blank leaves, 4-6, cancelled with no loss of text]), horizontal catchwords, inner lower margins in quires ten and eleven only, no signatures, frame-ruled in lead or brown crayon with all rules full length, (justification 70-68 x 45-40 mm.), written below the top line in a quick cursive gothic bookhand in twenty to seventeen long lines, majuscules in text stroked in red, red rubrics, one- to three-line red initials, ff. 1 and 17, seven- to five-line red initials with scroll-work infilling and beading in brown ink with touches of red, textblock in good condition, thumbled throughout and with other signs of use, small hole and loss of bottom corner on f. 256. Bound in its ORIGINAL wooden boards, covered with brown leather, blind-tooled with triple fillets (five along the top horizontal) forming a rectangular frame, spine with three raised bands and head and tail bands wound with red and green threads, paper label on spine, "15070," once fastened back to front, nails remain from two clasps and catches, lifted pastedowns revealing thongs, front cover now loose and attached by one thong only, front cover damaged and partly missing, both covers and top and bottom of spine worn. Dimensions 103 x 70 mm.

In its original binding, this Prayerbook was made for (or possibly by) Nicholas, a Premonstratensian Canon in the Low Countries most likely at the Abbey of Tongerlo near Antwerp. Remarkably comprehensive, it includes more than seventy prayers, hymns, and sequences and forty-six Suffrages, the Hours of the Cross, Penitential Psalms, Litany, Office of the Dead and Hours of the Virgin. Books such as these are the backbone of our knowledge of late medieval spirituality, in this case within a monastic context, and deserve more attention in the scholarly literature.

**PROVENANCE**

1. The evidence of the script, decoration, and watermark support an origin at the end of the fifteenth century in the Low Countries; the watermark is obscured, and split because of the small format of the manuscript, but it is still identifiable as a widespread type used in the Low Countries near Antwerp and in the Rhineland in the last decades of the fifteenth century in the 1480s and 1490s.

The probable identity of the original owner of the manuscript, or possibly the scribe, is found within the very popular prayer to the Virgin Mary beginning "Obsecro te," found here on ff. 95-98, which mentions "your servant Nicholas" on f. 97, line 3 ("... Et mihi famulo tuo Nicolao expectans a dilecto filio tuo ..."). The Office of the Dead and Hours of the Virgin follow Premonstratensian Use; the litany, which includes St. Augustine twice, is also in keeping with Premonstratensian custom.

The Order of Canons Regular of Premontr  was founded in 1120 by Norbert of Xanten (c. 1080-1134) and approved in 1126 by Pope Honorius II. The order was well-established by the thirteenth century with more than 1,000 houses by 1230. Their way of life combined an austere regular monastic existence under a rule based on St. Augustine's and an active cure of souls, including pastoral work in various parishes.

The litany and suffrages include a number of saints popular in the Low Countries, in the diocese of Cambrai, and in Cologne (Gaugeric, bishop of Cambrai; Vedast, bishop of Arras and Cambrai; Amandus, the "apostle of Flanders"; Ursula, and Gertrude, all included in the litany). The prominence given to St. Dympna (often spelled Dymphna), who is included in the litany and in the suffrages, however, seems particularly significant. Dympna, a seventh-century Irish saint, was martyred in Belgium near the town now known as Gheel (or Geel). We can therefore conclude that this manuscript was certainly copied at a Premonstratensian monastery in the Low Countries, probably in diocese of Cambrai, and quite possibly near Antwerp. Given the presence of St. Dympna in the litany and suffrages, it seems very likely that we can identify this monastery as Tongerlo, which is very close to Gheel in Westerlo, about fifty kilometers east of Antwerp.

Tongerlo is a Premonstratensian Abbey founded in 1130; suppressed during the French revolution, and then re-established in 1840. It was an important monastery throughout the Middle Ages (some of the surviving manuscripts from Tongerlo are listed in Koyen and Van Dyck, 1992, p. 271, note 90; and van Waefelghem, 1930, pp. 294-297, no. 656).

2. Marks for tabs, ff. 179 and 273; a few added prayers in contemporary or slightly later hands, ff. 60v, 199v-202 (in Dutch), and 278v-283, but most of the blank leaves between sections remain blank.

3. Top margin, f. 280v, inscription, possibly an owner's note, almost entirely erased.

4. f. i (front), verso, "1138," in ink; paper label on spine with "15070," in ink.

## TEXT

ff. 1-16v, Hours of the Cross, Passion according to John, and Prayers; *Incipiunt hore de sancta cruce ad matutinas, ...; Passio domini nostri Ihesu Christi secundum Iobannem, Gloria domine, In illo tempore ...* [Passion According to John, mostly from John 19:1-34, but partly from Matthew], followed by prayers, f. 6v, incipit, "Deus qui manus tuas et pedes tuos ..."; f. 7v, *Ad completorium, Domine ihesu christi fili dei vivi qui hora completorum ...*"; f. 8, *Oratio septem verbis domini qui loquebatur in cruce*, incipit, "Dilecte ihesu christi qui septem verba ore ultimo vite ... [prayers to say at each of the canonical hours; cf. Leroquis, 1927, 2:342]; f. 12v, *Oratio devota ante crucem dicenda*, incipit, "Crucem tuam adoramus domine ihesu et sanctam passionem et resurrectionem tuam ..."; f. 13v, *Oratio ante crucem divina*, "Crucem tuam adoramus domine et confitemur ..." [ends bottom f. 16; f. 16v, blank];

ff. 17-32v, *Incipiunt septem psalms penitentiales ...*; Seven Penitential Psalms [Psalms 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129, and 142], followed by litany, including Quentin, Maurice and Denis among the martyrs, Augustine (twice), Remigius, Gaugeric, bishop of Cambrai, Autbert, Amandus, Vedast, Medard, and Willibrod among the confessors, and Genevieve, Dympna, Margaret, Ursula, Gertrude, Anne and Elizabeth among the virgins and widows.

The litany may be compared with a much earlier thirteenth-century Psalter made for Premonstratensian Use sold on this site (textmanuscripts.com, TM 341), which also includes St. Augustine twice.

[ff. 33-82v, Prayers associated with the Mass and the Eucharist:]

f. 33, *Incipiunt sacramenta misse*, incipit, [Ant.] "Ne reminiscaris domine ..."; [Ps. 83] "Quam dilecta tabernacula ...", [Ps. 84] *Benedixisti domine ...* [Ps. 85] *Inclina domine ...*"; [Ps. 115] *Credidi ...*"; followed by prayers, and f. 40v, *Confessio ante missam*, incipit, "Confiteor deo omnia peccata mea quecumque feci ab infancia mea ...";

The customary Antiphon and Psalms said by the priest in preparation for saying Mass.

ff. 43v-50v, *Oratio deuotissima sancti ambrosii ante missam dicenda*, incipit, "Summe sacerdos ...";

These are prayers to be said before Mass for each day of the week; they are traditionally attributed to St. Ambrose, but more likely are by the eleventh-century author, Jean de Fécamp (1028-1078). They were included in the Missal by Pius V; see Wilmart, 1932, pp. 106 ff., and 114 ff; online edition in Latin and English at:

<http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/AnteMissam/OrationesSAmb.html>

ff. 50v-52, *Oratio ante communionem*, incipit, "Omnipotens et misericors deus ecce accedo ad sacrosanctum sacramentum corporis christi ...";

ff. 52-53, incipit, "O fons totius ..." [Ends mid f. 53; remainder blank];

ff. 53v-55, *Complendum a sacerdotis*, incipit, "Trium puerum cantamus ymnum quem cantabant in camino ignes ..."; *Ps. Benedicite* [cue only, Canticle of the three children, Dan. 3:57]; *Ps. Laudate* [cue only, Psalm 150], ... *Oratio*, incipit, "Deus qui tribus pueris mitigasti flammam ignium ..."; *Oratio...*, incipit, "Obsecro te dulcissime domine ihesu christi ut passio tua sit mihi uirtus quia ...," incipit, "Corda fidelium ...";

Similar to the prayers said after Mass in the Miniature Prayer Book, Germany, c. 1400-50 [textmanuscripts.com, inventory number, TM 258], in Munich, Clm 3702, Prayers and Meditations, Schwaben 1468/9, and in San Marino California, Huntington Library, HM 1169, ff. 24v-29, Book of Hours, use of Langres, France, late fifteenth century. The prayers are not identical with those in the Missale Romanum.

ff. 55-57, *Sequuntur quidem deuotissime orationes dicendum ante imaginem ...*, *Incipit prima oratiuncula*, incipit, "O Domine ihesu et adoro fori cruce ..." [Each section of the prayer followed by the Pater noster and Ave maria];

ff. 57-59, *Oratio ante communionem*, incipit, "Agnus dei ...," *Oratio diuina ante communionem*, incipit, "Conscientia domine ihesu .."; ff. 59-60v, *Sequuntur in deuota ante communionem a sacerdote ...*, incipit, "O dulcissime atque amatissime domine ihesu ..." [Ends top f. 60v; prayers added by a later hand in the blank space remaining];

f. 61rv, *Oratio ante communionem*, incipit, "Veniam peto domine ihesu ...";

ff. 61v-63, *Oratio sacerdotis ante missam*, incipit, "Summe sacerdos veri pontificis domine ...";

Although this includes the same opening word as the prayer ascribed to St. Ambrose found here beginning on f. 43v, this version is much shorter.

f. 63rv, incipit, "Salve sancta caro ... [Leroquais, 1927, 2:348]";

ff. 63v-64, *In elevatione corporum christi*, incipit, "Ave salvus mundi ...";

f. 64rv-65, *Johannes pape dedit dicentibus istam orationem in elevatione hostie c dies indulgentias*, incipit, "Ave caro christi cara immolate crucis ... [Wilmart, 1932, p. 379 note]";

ff. 64v-65, *In elevatione sanguinis*, incipit, "Ave sacram christi sanguinis ..";

ff. 65-67, *Oratio multam devotio*, incipit, "In presentia et miraculo corporum christi et sanguinis eius ..." [Ends top f. 81v; remainder and f. 82rv blank];

[ff. 83-139v, Twenty-seven prayers, hymns and sequences in honor of the Virgin Mary:]

ff. 83-85v [rubric specifying seven years of indulgences granted by Pope Boniface], incipit, "Stabat mater ...";

f. 85v, *Devotissime salutationes de beata virgines*, incipit, "Ave virgo gratiosa/ Stella sole clarior ...";

ff. 91v-95, *Oratio bona valde de beatissima virgine maria*, incipit, "Recordare virgo christi/ quia hic quem dilexisti ...";

ff. 95-98, *Oratio valde bona ad maria*, incipit, "Obsecro te ... [f. 97, line 3] Et mihi famulo tuo Nicolao expectans a dilecto filio tuo ... [Wilmart, 1932, pp. 488-90]";

ff. 98v-101v, incipit, "O intemerata ...";

ff. 102-104, *Incipit oratio deuoto et valde bona ad beatissimam et gloriossimam virginem mariam et ad Johannem euangelistam apostolicam ...*, incipit, "O intemerata et in eternum benedicta ... et esto michi peccatori ... [Leroquais, 1927, 2:346]";

ff. 104-105, *Sequuntur oratio dicitur aurea roque ...*, incipit, "Ave rosa sine spinas ...";

ff. 105v-106v, incipit, "Ave maria ancilla trinitatis humiliam ...";

ff. 106v-107, incipit, "O domina mea sancta maria me es tuam benedicta ..";

ff. 107-108; ff. 108-113v, [long rubric promising indulgences], incipit, "O eterne beatissima et dulcissima virgo maria mater dei omnium puritate plenissima ...";

ff. 113v-115, *Oratio de gaudiis beate marie ...*, incipit, "Gaude virgo mater christus ... [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 7017]";

ff. 114v-115, *Quinque gaudia beatissime marie*, incipit, "Gaude virgo gratiosa ...";

ff. 115-117, *Hec sunt septem gaudia beate maria ...*, incipit, "Gaude flore virginali ... [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 6810; printed Leroquais, 1927, 2:343";

[Continuing, ff. 117-136v, with thirteen more prayers to the Virgin Mary;]

ff. 136v-138v, incipit, "O gloriosa domina omnium mulierum ..."; [ends top f. 138v; remainder and f. 139rv, blank];

[ff. 140-148v, Twelve prayers, the first four for before or after Communion:]

ff. 140-141, incipit, "Eya m oro dulcissime ...":

f. 141rv, *Alia oratio ante sanctam communionem*, incipit, "Anima christi sanctifica me ...";

The "Anima Christi" remains one of the most treasured prayers in the Roman Catholic Church, traditionally said after Mass, or after receiving communion; Pope John the XXII granted indulgences for reciting the prayer in 1330; it may have been written by this Pope or by another writer in the first half of the fourteenth century; Latin and English in <http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/PostMissam/AnimaChristi.html>; see also Leroquais, 1927, 2:340.

ff. 141v-142v, *Sequitur oratio post communionem*, incipit, "Hec sunt communia qui tibi placent ...";

f. 143rv, *Alia oratio ante sanctam communionem*, incipit, "Ineffabilem misericordiam tuam domine ihesu christi ...";

f. 144, *Alia oratio*, incipit, "Gratias tibi piissime qui me ...":

f. 147v, *Alia oratio*, incipit, "Corpus tuum domine ..." [Ends botom f. 147v; f. 148rv, blank];

[ff. 149-156v, Seven prayers; ends top f. 155v; remainder and f. 156rv, blank];

ff. 157-167v, Suffrages of Michael the Archangel, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, Andrew, John the Evangelist, Thomas, Mathias, James, Bartholomew, and All apostles [ending bottom f. 167; f. 167v, blank];

ff. 168-175v, *Incipiunt orationes de martiribus, Et primo de sancto Stephano protomartyro ...*; Suffrages of Stephen, Lawrence, Sebastian, George, Christopher, Erasmus, of the Theban legion, and all martyrs [ends mid f. 174v, remainder and f. 175rv, blank];

ff. 176-184v, Suffrages of Pope Gregory, Jerome, Bernard, Ambrose, Augustine, Martin, Nicholas, and Anthony hermit, the Three Magi, and all priests and confessors (mentioning by name Gregory, Nicholas, Ambrose, Jerome, Bernard, Benedict, Egidius, Leonard, Anthony, and Paul) [ends top f. 184; remainder and ff. 184v, blank];

ff. 185-199, Suffrages of Barbara, Catherine, Mary Magdalene, Dymrna, Cecelia, Lucy, Agnes, Agatha, Margaret, Anne, Elizabeth, Ursula, 1,000 Virgins, Gertrude, Appollonia, all virgins, and all saints;

Following the prayer in the Suffrages of Barbara, Catherine, and Mary Magdalene, are additional "gaudia" for each saint: f. 186, *Quinque gaudia beate barbare*, incipit, "Gaude Barbara regiam ..."; f. 188v, *Quinque gaudia beate Katherine*, incipit, "Gaude virgo katherinam ..."; f. 189v, *Septem gaudia beate marie magdalene*, incipit, "Gaude pia magdalenam ..."

ff. 199v-202, [Prayers in Dutch added in a contemporary hand], incipit, "O here Jhesu verhaert ...", f. 201, *O baermherhighe heer Jhesu chrsite die altyt ...* [ending top f. 202; remainder and f. 202v-206v, blank];

ff. 207-243v, Office of the Dead, Premonstratensian Use (see Ottosen, 1993, pp. 141-142, and pp. 277-279); f. 234, *Incipiunt commendatio fidelium animarum ...*; [f. 243v, blank];

ff. 244-278v, Hours of the Virgin, Premonstratensian Use (following criteria for identifying use in "New Texts for Localization ...", CHD," see Online Resources); lauds followed by suffrages of Angels, John the Evangelist, Apostles, Nicholas, Catherine, Virgins, and All Saints, and changed Office;

ff. 278v-283, Added prayers in Latin in two contemporary or slightly later hands, or [Ending mid f. 283; remainder and f. 283v blank].

This is best described as a Prayer Book – in other words, a collection of texts for private devotion, rather than a service book for the public, collective liturgy, made for the use of Nicholas (or perhaps copied by him), a Premonstratensian Canon (see above, provenance). Collections of prayers such as this one are important sources for scholars interested in the history of late medieval spirituality. It is interesting to compare the content of this book with the content of a Book of Hours – this collection, which looks so different than a Book of Hours (written in a quick cursive script, on paper, and lacking all decoration), is actually not dissimilar in its contents to many later Books of Hours, although this manuscript includes many more prayers.

It is of particular interest that all the prayers here, with the exception of an added text on ff. 199-202, are in Latin, in keeping with the origin of this manuscript in a House of Premonstratensian Canons. This is a book that reflects the private devotional practices and interests of a cleric, rather than a lay person. It is a comprehensive collection, including more than seventy prayers, hymns and sequences and forty-six Suffrages, as well as the Hours of the Cross, Penitential Psalms, Litany, Office of the Dead and Hours of the Virgin. There are only a few prayers that begin with rubrics describing their benefits and promising indulgences to the faithful, making this a more restrained collection than many from this date.

The contents are organized, with the prayers, sequences and hymns grouped according to their type, including groups focused on the Passion, the Mass and Communion, the Virgin Mary and a very extensive and organized collection of Suffrages to various Saints. Leaves were left blank between each section, doubtless intended for additions. It is possible that a careful study of the text of this manuscript could tell us the story of how it was compiled. It is hard not to picture Nicholas as an eager, indeed zealous, collector of prayers, adding in texts from any source that came his way.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Piccard Online

<http://www.piccard-online.de/ergebnis1.php>

"New Tests for Localization of Hours of Virgin," in "Late Medieval and Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts – Books of Hours 1400-1530. Institute for Studies of Illuminated Manuscripts in Denmark. CHD Center for Handskriftstudier i Danmark"

[http://www.chd.dk/use/hv\\_chdtest.html#Quando](http://www.chd.dk/use/hv_chdtest.html#Quando)

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<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12350a.htm>

Geudens, Francis Martin. "Premonstratensian Canons," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, New York, Robert Appleton Company, 1911

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12387b.htm>

"Premonstratensians," in the *Schaff Encyclopedia*

<http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/encyc/encyc09/htm/iv.iv.xxix.htm>

Website of Premonstratensian Order

<http://www.premontre.org/Publica/Gate-Welcome%20Page/Gate-Welcome%20Page001.htm>

Incunabula from Tongerlo at KB

[http://www.kb.nl/bc/incun/incun\\_1-en.html](http://www.kb.nl/bc/incun/incun_1-en.html)

Tongerlo: Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe-Abdij

[http://hlab.dyndns.org/pub/webplek/ike/ike/churches/premonstratensians/Tongerlo\\_OLV\\_abdij\\_ch.htm.oud](http://hlab.dyndns.org/pub/webplek/ike/ike/churches/premonstratensians/Tongerlo_OLV_abdij_ch.htm.oud)

"Thesaurus precum latinorum (Treasury of Latin Prayers)"; includes Latin text and English translation of many popular prayers

<http://www.preces-latinae.org/index.htm>

TM 522