

## Dominican Venitarium

In Latin, manuscript on parchment with musical notation  
Spain (Castille?), c. 1475-1510

26 folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto, complete (collation i-iii<sup>8</sup> iv<sup>2</sup>), no catchwords or signatures, ruled lightly in lead with the top and bottom horizontal rules full across and double full-length vertical bounding lines, prickings top, bottom, inner and sometimes outer margins (justification 275 x 190 mm.), six lines of text and music on five-line red staves, rastrum 30 mm., red rubrics, one-line red or blue initials with violet or blue penwork respectively, numerous large, handsome, alternately red and blue initials the height of a line of text and music with violet or red penwork, several striking pages with initials on every line (ff. 1, 10, 13v, 24); long hole on f. 4 in outer margin with original sewing intact, lower margin of first leaf torn, some stains and smudges, but in very good condition. Sewn into a limp vellum wrapper made from a very large document in Spanish (described below), fastening back to front with toggles and loops, somewhat worn and stained, small hole in the fold on the back cover. Dimensions 404-398 x 290-285 mm.

Music manuscripts used in monastic communities provide important evidence on how song constituted a critical component of communal life, and Choir Books for the Mass and Divine Office are well known. This example, however, is exceptionally rare – a manuscript that contains only the musical settings of the Invitatory Psalm (Psalm 94, Come let us praise the Lord with joy), sung daily at the beginning of Matins, with antiphons changed for the day and liturgical season. Still preserved in its original limp vellum binding made from a single very large document in Spanish, this is a striking artifact for display and teaching.

## PROVENANCE

1. Written in Spain most likely in the latter part of the fifteenth century or early sixteenth century, c. 1475-1510 as indicated by the script and decoration; the use of five-line staves for plain chant was more common in Spain in the fifteenth century than elsewhere in Europe (where four-line staves were standard). Both Dominic and Peter Martyr are included in the text, suggesting this was made for Dominican use. The present binding, made from a single very large document in Spanish, perhaps from Castile (described in detail below), is certainly one of the interesting features of this manuscript, and supports a Spanish provenance.
2. Occasional marginal notes show this was used liturgically into the seventeenth century; see ff. 10v, 13, 15v, and 24.
3. Owned by a woman (or a female convent?) in the seventeenth century; inscription, f. 26v, "Mi señora Doña Cat Salina de el santo."

## TEXT

ff. 1-26v, Settings for the Invitatory Psalm (Psalm 94), incipit "Venite exultemus domino iubilemus ..." with Invitatory antiphons for each tone: ff. 1-4, *De primo tono cum suo venite. Dominica tercia aduentus domini*, incipit, "Surgite" [continuing, with Vincent, Conversion of Paul, Seat of Peter, Commemoration of Paul, Peter in Chains, Peter Martyr, Nativity of the Virgin, All Saints, Martin, Common of Saints, apostles, and many martyrs]; ff. 4-7, *Inuitatoria de secundo tono cum suo venite*, ... [antiphons for Mary Magdalene, Augustine, Common of Saints, one martyr, Common

of saints, one confessor]; ff. 7-9v, *Inuitatoria de iii<sup>o</sup> tono*, ... [antiphons for Michael and Common of Saints, evangelists]; ff. 9v-15v, *Inuitatoria de iiii<sup>o</sup> tono cum suo venite*, ... [antiphons for the first two Sundays in Advent, vigil of Christmas, Passion Sunday, Palm Sunday, Trinity Sunday, Dedication of a Church, Nicholas (bishop), Stephen, John the Evangelist, Purification, Peter and Paul, Invention of Stephen, Dominic, Assumption, Exaltation of the Cross, Catherine, Common of Saints, a virgin]; ff. 15v-18, *Inuitatoria de quinto tono cum suo uenite*, ... [antiphons for Low Sunday, Ascension, Pentecost]; ff. 18-23v, *Inuitatoria de vi<sup>o</sup> tono*, ... [numerous antiphons including those for various ferial days, the octaves of the Epiphany and John the Baptist, and others]; ff. 23v-26v, *Inuitatoria de vii<sup>o</sup> tono cum suo uenite*, ... [antiphons for the Sunday after the Octave of Epiphany, Sundays in Lent, Holy Cross, Andrew, and the Annunciation].

This is a very rare example of a manuscript that contains only the musical settings of the Psalm 94, "Venite exultemus" (Come let us praise the Lord with joy), the Invitatory Psalm sung daily at the beginning of Matins, with different antiphons depending on the day and liturgical season. Sources refer to collections such as these as Venitarium or Invitatorium, but very few examples seem to have survived as independent volumes such as this one. These texts are much more commonly found as a section within Antiphonaries or noted Breviaries.

However, there is no doubt that the manuscript described here was always an independent volume. Another example can be found in Lérida, Museo Diocesano (Hughes, 982, p. 379). And it can be compared to the large format manuscript, formerly Les Enluminures, TM 384, also from Spain, which, like the present manuscript includes only a small selection (32 folios) of texts for the Office (including an Invitatorium), and the Mass, but which was also almost certainly always an independent volume.

The very large format of this manuscript is seen in other liturgical manuscripts copied for use in the Choir. This format enabled a whole group of singers to share one manuscript. Choir books such as Antiphonals and Graduals were very large, and also lengthy (and usually multi-volume) manuscripts. This manuscript, in contrast, is an unusual example of a liturgical *libellum* (or little book), that is a brief book with focused contents, in a very large Choir format.

The present binding was made from a single very large document in Spanish, which was turned on its side, so the text begins on the inside, front cover (aligned vertically). The document apparently still begins with the first line of text, and concludes with the notary's mark at the bottom (now obscured). It was generously folded at both sides and at the bottom to form a sturdy wrapper, with the quires stitched through the fold and fastening on the inside. Two toggle fasteners added at the back, and loops on the front cover, were all stitched through the folded document, so although the document is preserved here almost in its entirety only the middle sections are easily read without disassembling the binding. Two long cords extending from upper sewing station on the spine may have once been part of a book mark.

The document, probably a legal document dealing with the transfer of property, is huge; its unfolded size can be estimated as c. 740 x 640 mm. with c. 120 lines visible. It is written in a very fine Spanish documentary script from the third quarter of the fifteenth century. Toledo is mentioned several times, suggesting an origin in Castile.

The Invitatorium, as the word implies, is the invitation addressed to the faithful to come and take part in the Divine Office. The psalm "Venite" has been used for this purpose from very

early in the history of the Church. The antiphons that follow each verse are changed according to whether it is a ferial or a saint's Office that is being recited, as is the tone used to chant both the psalm and the antiphons. The Invitatorium was purposely chanted slowly to enable the monks who were coming to the vigil to arrive in time for the beginning of the Office. The text of the Invitatory Psalm even in examples as late as the present manuscript is not the Gallican Psalter (the version found in medieval manuscripts of the Vulgate), but the earlier Roman Psalter.

## LITERATURE

Bonniwell, William R. *A History of the Dominican Liturgy*, New York, 1944.

Hughes, Andrew. "Medieval Liturgical Books in Twenty-Three Spanish Libraries: Provisional Inventories," *Traditio* 38, 1982, pp. 365–394.

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Harper, John. *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*, Oxford, 1991.

King, Archdale, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, Milwaukee, 1955.

Palazzo, Eric. *A History of Liturgical Books from the Beginning to the Thirteenth Century*, translated by Madeline Beaumont, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1998.

Plummer, John. *Liturgical Manuscripts for the Mass and Divine Office*, New York, 1964.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Jeneka Janzen, "Mark Their Words," *Medieval Fragments* (blog), with examples of "Register" Bookmarks

<https://medievalfragments.wordpress.com/2014/07/11/mark-their-words-medieval-bookmarks/>

Roman Psalter

<http://www.liberpsalmorum.info/>

TM 880