

Missal

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
Southern Netherlands, Brabant (Mechelen), c. 1460-1490

iii (paper) + 206 + iii (paper), folios on parchment, original foliation in red ink, I-CC (occasionally incorrect), modern foliation in pencil, 1-206, complete (collation i⁶ ii-xiii⁸ xiv² xv⁸ xvi⁶ [a leaf with the Canon miniature, f. 113, added in the beginning of the quire] xvii-xxvi⁸ xxvii⁸ [last leaf of the quire, blank, removed; the first end flyleaf is glued to the tab]), modern pencil quire markings, a-z, aa-bb, ruled in brown ink (justification 170 x 110 mm), written in brown ink in textualis (formata) bookhand in two columns of 28 lines, seven 3- to 5-line pen-flourished initials, one 4-line illuminated initial with borders on two sides, one 9-line illuminated cross, ONE FULL-PAGE MINIATURE on an inserted leaf, occasional natural flaws and tears, often displaying contemporary repairs, light marginal staining to certain calendar pages, otherwise in excellent condition. Bound in the nineteenth or early twentieth century in vellum over pasteboards with yapp edges, on the spine is inscribed "MISSALE Romanum," flyleaves at the front and back of the book have a "foolscap" watermark which has been remarked on Rembrandt drawings in the first half of the seventeenth century; this variant has no bells on the fool's hat. Dimensions 246 x 178 mm.

This is a fine copy in near-perfect condition of an illuminated Missal. It is firmly localized by text and illustration in medieval Brabant, and its illumination can be attributed to a follower of the Master of Gerard Brilis, an artist working in the southern Lowlands in the third quarter of the fifteenth century. It was likely made for use in a family's private chapel in or near Mechelen (Malines).

PROVENANCE

1. The text of this Missal provides evidence that it was made in Brabant, for use in or near Mechelen; based on the style of the decoration, it can be dated 1460-1490. Its contents indicate particular veneration of St. Rumbold, patron saint of Mechelen. Rumbold is included four times in the calendar. His feast is included in red on 1 July, followed by the octave on 8 July, and the translation of his relics on 19 October, followed on 27 October by the "relatio" (a specific word used in this region for the octave of a translation). Rumbold is also included in the Sanctorale (ff. 155v, 157v). Other local saints in the calendar are: St. Gudule, patron saint of Brussels (8 Jan), St. Servatius of Tongeren, patron saint of Maastricht (14 May), St. Lambert of Maastricht (17 Sept), and St. Gummarus, patron saint of Lier, a town 15 km from Mechelen (11 Oct).

The obit of Nicolas van Woelmont (1415-1472) was added at 19 February in the calendar in a fifteenth-century hand: "obijt Nicolaus de W[oe]lmont a[nn]o lxxij" (f. 1v). Nicolas van Woelmont, seigneur de Schaersbrouck, belonged to a prominent family in Brabant, and served as the chatelain of Jean de Nassau (1419-1480) at Corroy-le-Château and at Frasnes (Goethals, vol. 4, [no page number]).

Notes recording births and deaths within a family, known in French as *livres de raison*, are often found in Books of Hours; in modern times, family Bibles were used in this way. This Missal only includes one obit, nonetheless it is unusual to find a personal note of this sort in a Missal, which was a liturgical book used by a priest, and not a personal book associated with family ownership. The inclusion of Nicolas van Woelmont's obit, therefore, together with

the very fine condition of this manuscript, suggest that it was likely made Nicholas or someone in his family, for use in their family chapel.

2. Bookplate of John Landwehr (1924-), the collector, bookseller and bibliographer, inside the front cover (including his motto "Vita sine literis mors est"). Landwehr has published extensively on emblem books made in the Low Countries since the sixteenth century. The pencil quire markings, and the occasional small arrow pointing to a section of the text, are possibly by Landwehr.

TEXT

ff. 1-6v, Calendar;

ff. 7-104, Temporale, beginning with the first Sunday in Advent, *Dominica prima adventus introitus*, "Ad te levavi animam meam..."; [f. 104v blank];

ff. 105-112, Prefaces, the Gloria and the Creed, *Prefaciones tocuis anni et primo de nativitate domini*, "Per omnia saecula saeculorum..."; [f. 112v, blank];

[f. 113, blank; f. 113v, Crucifixion miniature]; ff. 114-119v, Canon of the Mass;

ff. 120-176, Sanctorale, from St Andrew (30 Nov) to St Katherine (25 Nov), including St Rumbold (ff. 155v, 157v);

ff. 176v-190v, Votive Masses (rubric on f. 176: *Missa de sancta maria a penthecostes usque ad adventum domini*); [f. 191rv, blank];

ff. 192-206v, Common of Saints, *In vigilia unius apostoli. Introitus*.

ILLUSTRATION

The painted decoration of the manuscript includes one full-page miniature of the Crucifixion illustrating the Canon of the Mass, with full decorated borders (f. 113v), one 4-line illuminated initial for the First Sunday of Advent, with borders in the inner and lower margins (f. 7), and one 9-line illuminated cross (f. 40). The penwork flourishing is also noteworthy, and includes large acanthus leaves, a face in profile (First Sunday of Advent, f. 7), a large carrot flower (Prefaces, f. 105) and a more unusual pea flower (Te igitur prayer, f. 114).

The borders around the inserted Crucifixion miniature are similar to those surrounding an inserted miniature of the *Throne of Mercy* in a Collectary made for use at the Cistercian priory of Muysen, near Mechelen (Tournai, Bibliothèque du Séminaire, MS 12). The inserted miniature in the Collectary was painted around 1460, while the rest of the manuscript is datable by its text after 1476 and by its penwork decoration in the 1480s (see Lebique, Online Resources). The grapes and strawberries finalized with small white dots are similar in the Collectary's inserted miniature and the miniature in the Missal described here, but the execution, the colors, the scrolling acanthus leaves and the leaves on the fruit stems are different.

The miniature in the Collectary was painted by the Master of Gerard Brilis, an artist active in the southern Low Countries throughout the third quarter of the fifteenth century. He contributed

miniatures to works made in Brussels and Ghent, as well as in some outlying monastic centers (Marrow, 2007, p. 169). The Crucifixion and its border in our Missal are most probably by a local follower of the Master of Gerard Brilis. This artist juxtaposed red and blue in the garments of Mary and John and outlined the hems of their cloaks with a prominent white line. The conservative diapered background is similar to that in the *Throne of Mercy* miniature in the Muysen Collectary (f. 21v). The gesture that Mary makes with her hands, joining her fingers to form a triangle before her womb, is found in other late medieval Crucifixions painted in Brabant, such as the panel by the Master of the Antwerp Adoration now in Edinburgh.

The 9-line illuminated cross on f. 40 is especially fascinating. It arrives at the very moment in the text when Christ dies on the cross: "Ihesus autem iterum clamans voce magna emisit spiritum" (Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost; Matt. 27:50). The four red marks on the golden cross symbolize the holy wounds on Christ's body. The largest in the center is the wound in the side of Christ's chest, pierced by the lance of Longinus the centurion to ensure he was dead, and the three smaller ones on the arms of the cross symbolize the three nails that attached him to the cross, one through each palm of the hand and a third through the crossed feet. This corresponds to the four bleeding wounds visible in the Crucifixion miniature. By about the twelfth century the Wounds of Christ were often represented symbolically. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the cult of the Wounds developed further, and the Wounds were abstracted from the narrative context in which they had been considered closely with the four Arma Christi: the Lance and the three Nails. Prayers, poems and images concentrating on the Five Wounds served as the focus of devotion and prayer. Henry VI of England (1422-61) was said to have a picture representing the Wounds before him at table as he ate (Finaldi, 2000, p. 160).

This manuscript is a Missal, the liturgical book for the celebrant that includes all the texts necessary to celebrate the Mass. From the thirteenth century on Missals were the predominant book used by the celebrant during the Mass, and include the prayers for the celebrant, as well as the biblical readings, read or chanted by the sub-deacon or deacon, and the texts sung by the choir. Missals associated with particular families for use in their private chapels have received relatively little attention in the literature on medieval liturgical manuscripts; further study of this Missal within this context would make an interesting subject for further scholarly study.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

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<https://cel.archives-ouvertes.fr/cel-00194063/document>

Collectary made for the Priory of Muysen, Tournai, BS, MS12 (for comparison of decoration):

Description by J.-B. Lebigue

<http://www.cn-telma.fr/liturgie/notice111/>

Images in the Initiale database (IRHT/CNRS)

<http://initiale.irht.cnrs.fr/codex/11712>

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