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Breviary (Carthusian use)

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment

Northern Italy (Emilia-Romagna, Ferrara), c. 1460-1470

Five full illuminated borders, two historiated initials, and four medallions by an anonymous artist from Ferrara in the circle of Guglielmo Giraldi

ii + 318 + ii folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, 1-318, lacking one text leaf (collation i¹² ii¹ iii-ix¹⁰ x⁸ xi-xix¹⁰ xx¹⁰ [-6, lacking one leaf after f. 186, with loss of text] xxi¹⁰ xxii⁸ xxiii-xxxiii¹⁰), horizontal catchwords, ruled in brown ink (justification 57 x 43 mm.), written in brown ink in a very small module on 24 long lines, rubrics in red, 1-line initials alternating in red and blue, 2- to 3-line initials alternating in red with violet penwork and in blue with red penwork, several very fine 4- to 6-line initials on burnished gold grounds and hairline penwork extending into the margins and surrounding foliage and flowers in colors and gold pastilles, two of the initials infilled with stars, several band borders with penwork, foliage, flowers, and pastilles in gold and colors in the outer margins, FIVE FULL BORDERS with foliage, flowers and birds, FOUR HISTORIATED MEDALLIONS (lower margin of two of these borders) of the Annunciation with the Virgin Mary and Archangel Gabriel (f. 14), and the Nativity with St. Joseph(?) and the Christ Child (f. 120), TWO HISTORIATED INITIALS of King David (f. 14) and the Prophet Isaiah (f. 128v), some wear including pigments rubbed on f. 120, staining with loss of text on ff. 259v-260, leaves cropped close to decoration, lower margin f. 128 excised (with loss of the border), otherwise in very good condition. Bound in the eighteenth century in red morocco, spine flat and gold-tooled with small flowers, foliage and grapevine, title in gold "BREVIARIU" on green morocco, both covers gold-tooled with a frame of double fillets arranged in large scallops facing outward, small flowers, stars, circles and fleurs-de-lys, and in the corners schematic triangular flowers surmounting two volutes, gilt edges, marbled pastedowns and endpapers, minor wear to leather in the corners and spine, otherwise in excellent condition. Dimensions 90 x 65 mm.

Very small (just 3 1/2 inches high) but quite thick, this beautiful, illuminated Breviary is notable both for its association with an important monastery and as an example of artistic production in Renaissance Ferrara during the reign of the d'Este family. It was made in Ferrara for use at the recently built Carthusian monastery of San Cristoforo alla Certosa and illuminated by a talented follower and contemporary of Guglielmo Giraldi, an artist who worked for Borso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara.

PROVENANCE

1. The style of the illumination suggests that the manuscript was made in northern Italy, in the region of Emilia-Romagna, very likely in Ferrara, in the second half of the fifteenth century, c. 1470-1480. The text is for use of the Carthusian order. The calendar includes the feasts of St. Hugh of Lincoln, in red, (17 Nov), the twelfth-century French Carthusian monk who was made prior of Witham and later bishop of Lincoln, and St. Hugh of Grenoble, 12 lessons (1 Apr). While the feast of the founder of the order, St. Bruno is not included in the calendar (he was not canonized and included in the Carthusian calendar until 1515), a prayer was added to him in a small contemporary hand on f. 309. The special commemoration of the dead brothers of the Carthusians, *Commeratio fratrum nostrorum defunctorum* (9 Nov), is included in the calendar in red. The

specification "cum candelis" in the calendar refers to the Carthusian practice of lighting two candles for Mass, Lauds, and Vespers for particularly important feast days. The rubric to the Office of the Virgin specifies that it follows the use of the Carthusian brothers: "*Incipit officium beate virginis marie secundum ordinem fratrum Cartusiensium...*" (f. 293). The patron saint of Ferrara, St. George, is found in the calendar, 23 April.

Evidence of the calendar provides information for dating; the Visitation is included on July 2. This feast was permitted within the order in 1411 and made obligatory in 1468 as a solemn feast. In our manuscript it is in red, but not a solemnity "cum candelis." The Presentation on November 21, permitted in 1470, and made mandatory for the order is not included (Hourlier, 1975).

Borso d'Este (1413-1471), Duke of Ferrara, Modena, and Reggio, was the founder of the Carthusian charterhouse dedicated to St. Christopher, thus introducing a new religious order into Ferrara. The construction of this *Certosa* began in 1452. The building, privileges, and endowment were formally accepted into the Carthusian Order in a ceremony conducted at the charterhouse on the feast of St. John the Baptist, June 24, 1461 (Rosenberg, 1976, p. 330). The emphasis placed on St. John the Baptist in our Breviary, underlines the importance of this feast for the new Carthusian foundation. San Cristoforo alla Certosa in Ferrara was one of only two Carthusian houses founded in Italy in the fifteenth century; the other was founded in Mantua (Rosenberg, 1976, p. 331).

2. In the collection of Lucien Magne (1849-1916), the famous French architect.
3. A modern note in Italian on the end-leaf reads: "Ad usu dei cartusiani."

TEXT

ff. 1-12v, Calendar; including feasts graded for monastic use with twelve lessons, and with the specifically Carthusian grading "with candles";

f. 13, [Two prayers to St. Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary], *Commemoratio de beata Anna matre virginis gloriose Marie*, incipit, "Gaude felix Anna ..."; [in the lower margin, below the prayers, there was once an inscription on four lines, now erased; f. 13v, blank];

ff. 14-111v, Ferial Psalter;

ff. 111v-115, Litanies, with St. John the Baptist mentioned first, immediately after the angels, followed by prayers;

ff. 115-119v, [Cues for antiphons, Psalms and other elements of the Office of the Dead], "*Incipit officium in agenda mortuorum ad vesperas ...*", followed by prayers for different persons, for men and women, a lay person, an adversary, a priest, women, father and mother, the bishop, brothers of the order, benefactors of the monastery, all dead brothers, followed by nine lessons;

ff. 120-128, *Dominicis diebus quibus non sunt cantica deputata. Et in festo sancti Michaelis, cant.*, incipit, "Domine miserere mei ...";

Canticles for the liturgical year, beginning with a canticle for the feast of St. Michael.

ff. 128v-138v, Hymns for the liturgical year, beginning with *Conditor alme siderum* for Vespers on the first Sunday in Advent; after the main feasts of the Temporal, the first hymn provided for the Sanctoral is for the feast of St. John the Baptist (f. 132v); followed by lessons for the week from Tuesday to Saturday from Pentecost to November;

ff. 138v-151v, Capitula, or short readings, for the liturgical year, beginning with Advent;

ff. 151-190, Prayers for the liturgical year, including initials for the feasts of St. John the Baptist (f. 176), St. Michael (f. 182) and St. Hugh of Lincoln (f. 184v);

ff. 191v-213, Lessons for the liturgical year;

ff. 213v-279, Offices for the liturgical year (Temporal and Sanctoral);

ff. 279-292v, Common of Saints;

ff. 293-297, [Office of the Virgin, Carthusian use], *Incipit officium beate virginis marie secundum ordinem fratrum Cartusiensium. In primis ad matutinum ...*;

ff. 297-308, Mass for the Virgin for the liturgical year, beginning with Mass for the Advent;

ff. 308v-314v, Benedictions, lessons, and prayers;

ff. 315-318, [Instructions on liturgical observances], *Nota de agendis A festo omnium sanctorum usque ad septuagesimam post nonam...*; [Ending top f. 318; remainder and f. 318v, blank].

ILLUSTRATION

Two historiated initials, four historiated medallions, five full illuminated borders:

f. 14, Historiated initial of King David with his harp; full border with two historiated medallions in the lower margin depicting the protagonists of the Annunciation, the Virgin Mary and the Archangel Gabriel;

f. 120, Illuminated initial with a star, and full border with historiated medallions in the lower margin with the scene of the Nativity, St. Joseph(?) and the Christ Child; the medallions have been rubbed resulting in some loss of clarity;

f. 128v, Historiated initial of the prophet Isaiah holding a book, with a full border (lower margin excised, very likely with loss of historiated medallions);

ff. 138v and 152v, Full borders; f. 293, illuminated initial with a star.

One of the main artists working for the Este family and the Carthusians in Ferrara was Guglielmo Girardi, documented in 1441-1494 (on this illuminator, see especially Toniolo, 2001,

Online Resources and Mariani Canova, 1995). Girardi illuminated a Gradual, as well as a Bible in four volumes for the Carthusians of Ferrara. He also contributed to two of the most important campaigns of illumination undertaken for the Este by Taddeo Crivelli, the Bible of Borso d'Este, with over 1,000 miniatures painted between 1455 and 1461 (Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, MS Lat. 422-423) and the Hours of Andrea Gualengo and Orsina d'Este, painted around 1469 (Los Angeles, Getty Museum, MS Ludwig IX 13). The illuminator who painted our Breviary was a contemporary follower of Guglielmo Girardi.

Breviaries contain the complete text of the Divine Office, encompassing a program of readings, prayers, hymns, canticles, and Psalms arranged according to the canonical hours of the Divine Office. Although Breviaries commonly presented the services for each day arranged according to the hours of the Office, the texts here are chiefly arranged, at least in part, according to liturgical function (for example, capitula, prayers, and lessons are given for the whole year, extracted from their place within a particular Office). This arrangement may be a characteristic of Carthusian Breviaries. For other examples see Grenoble, Bibliothèque municipale, MSS 73 and 74 (Leroquais, 1934, II, pp.115-117) and on this site, the manuscript formerly TM 815.

The Carthusian Order, founded by St. Bruno of Cologne around 1084 and celebrated for the purity and austerity of its version of the religious life, is characterized by a unique combination of the eremitical and cenobitic life. Each Carthusian monk spends most of his life living as a hermit in his own cell, but at the same time lives under the rule and discipline of a community and participates in the communal liturgy of the monastery. According to the Carthusian rite, the only offices sung collectively were Matins (and sometimes Lauds) and Vespers. The remaining Hours were recited (or sung?) in the privacy and solitude of each monk's cell. Thus, the liturgical day of a Carthusian monk in the Middle Ages centered around the recitation of the Divine Office in his cell in between periods of work, study, and personal prayer, and attendance of the long night office of Matins and the evening office of Vespers in the church.

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