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**Mass Lectionary with Readings from the Epistles (Epistolarium)
In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment
Northern Italy (Brescia), c. 1461-1484**

i + 124 folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil in the lower corner, 1-124, lacking the last leaf of text, otherwise complete (collation i-xii¹⁰ xiii¹⁰ [-5, -7, -8, -9, -10, lacking the last leaf with loss of text and the last four blank leaves]), horizontal catchwords mostly on swirling cartouches with wash and penwork, ruled in gray ink (justification 174 x 127 mm.), written in black ink in an Italian rotunda on 21 lines, rubrics in red, 2-line initials alternating in red with purple penwork flourishes and in blue with red penwork flourishes, one large opening initial in blue decorated with foliage in white with red penwork against backgrounds painted in green and ochre, black ink of text slightly faded on f. 1 and some other leaves but text legible throughout, f. 121 loose from the top sewing, minor stains, tiny worm holes on the first and last leaves, in overall excellent condition. In its ORIGINAL BINDING with wooden boards, leather removed, traces of tooling with an interlacing pattern on the wooden back board, clasps and catches missing, worm holes and wear, but in overall good condition. Dimensions 260 x 186 mm.

This is a very fine display copy of an Epistolary. In its original binding, the volume boasts an attractive rounded Gothic script, an especially refined opening foliate initial, and lovely tinted swirling cartouches containing catchwords. Epistolaries are a rare type of liturgical manuscript, and this one represents a significant source for the history of the Dominican convent dedicated to Saint Florian, most likely St. Fiorano ai Ronchi in Brescia. The manuscript comes from the prestigious Italian collection of Count Ercole de Silva (1756-1840).

PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was made for use in a Dominican convent dedicated to St. Florian, as indicated by the opening words, "Incipit epistolare conventus sancti Floriani secundum consuetudinem fratrum predicatorum," almost certainly S. Fiorano ai Ronchi in Brescia. It can be dated after 1461, the canonization of St. Catherine of Siena, included in our manuscript, and although it can be misleading to argue from negative evidence, perhaps before 1484, when St. Leonard was included in the Dominican liturgy (not yet included in our manuscript), as suggested by liturgical evidence. The styles of the decoration and script support this date and place of origin.

S. Fiorano ai Ronchi was founded in 1418 on the outskirts of Brescia; in 1517, it was demolished for military reasons, and the Dominicans were transferred to San Clemente. We have not identified any manuscripts in their library, but they did own a collection of incunables, donated by Francesco Savaldi (1498-1517), a notary and grammar teacher in Brescia; see "Material Evidence in Incunables," Online Resources, listing thirteen volumes, most now in the Biblioteca Queriniana, Brescia, and including two now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

A feast of St. Florian appears twice in our manuscript. From their position in the Sanctoral, we can deduce that the first mention is for the feast of St. Florian of Lorch,

the patron saint of Linz, celebrated on May 4. His feast was introduced into Italy in Ravenna by Maximianus, the sixth-century bishop (Sausser, 1971, p. 627). The second feast of St. Florian is placed between St. Theodore (November 9) and St. Martin (November 11); we have not identified this feast in another sources, and it may be local to Brescia (a November 3 feast of St. Florian is recorded in Calendoscope; Online Resources). We may note that the feast of St. Florian of Gaza (d. 638), a saint very important in in Bologna from the end of the thirteenth century, was celebrated on December 17, and is thus unlikely to be the St. in our manuscript. In addition to St. Florian, our manuscript includes the feast of St. Philastratus, bishop of Brescia. Brescia is in the diocese of Milan, and saints Ambrose and Calimerus, both important in Mian, are also included.

2. Belonged to the library of the famous Italian writer and landscape architect Count Ercole de Silva (1756-1840); his stamp is found in the lower margin of f. 1. The collection was sold in Paris in 1869. Other manuscripts from this collection include a late fifteenth-century Carthusian Diurnal (Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 135 J 08), Sermons of Bernardino of Siena c. 1430-36 (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 174) and a late fifteenth-century *Libellus cantus mensurabilis* of Johannes de Muris (Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, II 00785).
3. Hartung & Hartung, auction 58, lot no. 4 (1989).
4. Modern booksellers' markings in pencil inside the front pastedown: "118" and "58/113/2".

TEXT

ff. 1-90v, incipit, "*Incipit epistolare conventus sancti Floriani secundum consuetudinem fratrum predicatorum. Lectio epistole beati pauli apostoli ad Romanos. Dominica premia adventus. xij. ca.º. Fratres, Scientes quia hora est... Ecce nova facio omnia.*";

Readings from the Epistles for the Temporal cycle from the first Sunday in Advent through to the twenty-fifth Sunday after the Octave of Pentecost, followed by the Dedication of a Church.

ff. 90v-114v, Readings from the Epistles for the Sanctoral cycle from the vigil of St. Andrew (November 29) to St. Saturnin of Toulouse (November 29) including saints Barbara, Nicholas, Ambrose of Milan, Damasus, Lucy, Thomas, Stephen, John the Evangelist, Holy Innocents, Silvester, Paul the first Hermit, Felix, Maurus, Marcel, Anthony, Prisca of Rome, Edward, Fabian and Sebastian, Agnes, Vincent, Emerentiana, Julian, Ignatius of Antioch (major shrine in Rome) (1 February), Blaise, Agathe, Apollonia, Scholastica, Marta, Faustinus and Jovita, Dorothea, Chair of Peter (22 February), Matthias (24 February), Albinus of Angers (1 March), Thomas Aquinas (7 March), Gregory (12 March), Benedict, Ambrose, Vincent (of Ferrer, 5 April), Tiburtius and Valerian, George, Honorius, Mark, Vitalis and Peter martyr, Timothy, Catherine of Siena, Philip and James (May 3), Invention of the Cross, Florian (May 4), Holy Crown, John at the Latin Gate, Translation of Peter Martyr, (7 May), Apparition of Michael (8 May), Gordianus and Epimachus of Rome, Nereus and Achilleus of Rome, Pancras of Rome, Servatius of Tongeren, Potentiana, Translation of Dominic, Urban, Petronilla of Rome, Martha, Marcellus, Medardus, Primus and Felician, Barnabas, Basilide, Cyrin, Nabor and Nazaire,

Anthony, Vitus and Modest, Martial, Cyriacus of Rome and Julita, Mark and Marcellian of Rome, Gervasius and Protasius of Milan, John the Baptist, John and Paul, Peter and Paul, Visitation of the Virgin, Apollonia, the Seven Brothers of Lazia, Procopius, Margaret, Alexis, Philastrius of Brescia (July 18), Praxedes, Mary Magdalene (July 22), Apollinaris, James, Martha, Nazarius, Celsus and Pantaleon, Felix, Simplicius, Faustinus and Beatrice, Abdon and Sennen, Calimerus of Milan, Germaine, Peter in Chains, Stephen, Dominic, Transfiguration of Christ (6 August), Lawrence, Hippolitus of Rome, Assumption of the Virgin, Bernard, Timotheus and Simphorianus, Bartholomew, Louis, Agapitus of Palestrina, Rufus, Beheading of John the Baptist, Felix and Adauctus of Rome, Giles, Nativity of the Virgin, Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Protus and Hyacinth of Rome, Cornelius and Cyprian, Nicomedes, Euphemia, Lambert, Matthew, Maurice, Cosmas and Damian, Wenceslaus of Bohemia, Michael, Jerome, Remy, Leodegar, Francis, Mark, Sergius, Bacchus, Marcellus and Apuleius of Rome, Denis, Edward, Callixtus, Luke, 11,000 virgins, Crispin and Crispianus, Simon and Jude (October 28), Theodore (9 November), Florian (10 November?), Martin (November 11), Brice (November 13), Elisabeth of Hungary (November 17), Cecilia, Clement of Rome, Chrysogonus of Rome, Catherine, Vitalis and Agricola of Bologna, and Saturnin;

In addition to Catherine of Siena, canonized in 1461, note the presence of Vincent of Ferrer (April 5), canonized in 1455, and the Transfiguration, observed from 1459.

ff. 114v-122, Readings from the Epistles for the Common of Saints;

ff. 122-124v, Readings from the Epistles for the feasts of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Cross, the Exaltation of the Cross, the Mass for the Virgin during Advent and during the year, for funerals, anniversaries and the sick, for avoiding mortality, for tribulations and for peace.

Our manuscript is a Mass Lectionary that includes the texts for the second reading during Mass, the Epistles; examples of Epistolaries are not common. By the late Middle Ages, almost every Mass included two readings, an Epistle and a Gospel reading. Lectionaries could include both Epistle and Gospel readings, but sometimes these were copied in separate books, in which case the Epistolarium was usually matched with another volume containing an Evangelarium (Evangelary), the Mass Lectionary with readings from the Gospels. For an example of such a pair, see Les Enluminures TM 930 and Bordeaux, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 998. The Mass Lectionary was used in the performance of the Mass. Biblical readings were chanted according to a simple tone and are thus rarely accompanied by musical notation in liturgical manuscripts. Our manuscript, however, was carefully accented for liturgical chanting.

The fact that the leather once covering the boards and spine is lacking allows an excellent opportunity to study the structure of the binding. It is possible to examine closely the leather thongs to which the quire sewing was attached as well as the compartments carved in the wooden boards into which were slid and attached the leather thongs and the clasps (now lacking).

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Brescia, Domenicani, S. Fiorano OP

<https://data.cerl.org/owners/572>

Incunables owned by S. Fiorano

https://data.cerl.org/mei/_search?query=data.provenance.agent.ownerId%3A572&size=10&mode=default&from=0

Convento di San Clemente, frati predicatori osservanti
(1418 - 1770)

<https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/archivi/soggetti-produttori/ente/MIDB000435/>

Calendoscope

<http://calendoscope.irht.cnrs.fr/accueil>

Jean-Baptiste Lebigue. "Les livres de la messe Les livres des lectures de la messe", *Initiation aux manuscrits liturgiques*, Paris-Orléans, IRHT, 2007 (Ædilis, Publications pédagogiques, 6):

<https://cel.hal.science/cel-00194063/document>

Introduction to liturgical manuscripts: "Celebrating the Liturgy's Books":

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

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