

Office Lectionary

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment

Southern Netherlands, Ghent or Bruges? c. 1500

195 folios, complete (collation: i-iv8, v6, vi4, vii-xiii8, xiv6, xv-xxv8, xxvi6), some catchwords, ruled in light red ink, written in lettres bâtarde in dark brown ink with some flourishes in the margin, text copied on up to 35 long lines (justification 137 x 93 mm.), rubrics in bright red, the Sanctoral foliated in red, small and larger initials throughout in red or blue, many on every page, often with elaborate flourishing or decorative scrolling, EIGHT LARGE ILLUMINATED INITIALS (ff. 1, 39, 108, 129, 152, 158, 167 and 178v) in designs of acanthus leaves in grey or brown heightened with white or liquid gold on colored or liquid gold grounds set within trompe-l'oeil frames and often enclosing flowers. Bound in eighteenth-century mottled calf, back sewn on 5 thongs, spine in compartments gilt, red title piece that reads: "Breviariu[m] per Antiq. M.S.S." frame on pasteboards of single blind filet, edges mottled in red (Fine overall condition, first pages a bit rubbed, upper joint a little split). Dimensions 214 x 155 mm.

Deluxe professionally-made copy of a relatively uncommon monastic text, an Office Lectionary, of ample format with wide margins, expertly written in a beautiful calligraphic hand with much pen flourishing, and skillfully decorated with fine Ghent-Bruges initials in colors and liquid gold, most likely for an unknown patron in a monastery in the southern Netherlands of Augustinian obedience.

PROVENANCE

1. Most likely written in the southern Netherlands, c. 1500, on the basis of the script, decoration, and certain liturgical features. The Sanctoral includes Saints Gertrude, Servatius (bishop of Tongeren), Amelberga (of Maubeuge), Lambert (bishop of Maastricht), Ghislain (especially Cambrai and Tournai), and others. It singles out the Birth of Saint Augustine with an illuminated initial (f. 159), and includes the translation of his relics (f. 172), both with octaves. The works of Saint Augustine are the principal designated sources of the lections. It is thus possible the manuscript was initially destined for a monastery of Augustinian obedience. Another important saint, equally singled out with an illuminated initial is Saint Michael (f. 129).
2. Bookplate, pasted on the upper pastedown, Edward Duff Balken (1874-1960), of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania; sold with his manuscript collection to Maggs, c. 1930 (their catalogue 542 [1930], no. 214 and catalogue 687 [1940], no. 206).
3. Charles E. Roseman, Jr., of Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

TEXT

ff. 1-5v, Beginning of the Temporal, with Advent, rubric, *Dominica primam adventus Incipit Esaias propheta. Lectio prima; incipit, "Visio Esaie filii Amos quam videt...";*

ff. 6-11, Nativity readings, rubric, *In vigilia nativitatis;*

ff. 11-24, Epiphany readings and following Sundays, rubric, *In vigilia epiphaniae*;

ff. 24-34, Lent readings, rubric, *Dominica in quadragesima*;

ff. 34-38v, Passion readings, rubric, *Dominica in passione*; f. 35v, Palm Sunday readings, *Dominica palmarum*;

ff. 39-45v, Easter readings, rubric, *In sancta nocte pasche*;

ff. 45v-48v, Ascension readings, rubric, *In vigilia assensionis*;

ff. 48v-54v, Pentecost readings, rubric, *In vigilia penthecostes*;

ff. 54v-107v, First Sunday after Pentecost to twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost, rubric, *Dominica prima post octavas penthecostes...*;

ff. 108-111v, Office of the Dedication of a Church, rubric, *In dedicatione ecclesie...*; incipit, "Quotiescumque fraters charissimi...";

ff. 112-195v, Beginning of Sanctoral, rubric, *In apparitione sancti Mychaelis archangeli*; incipit, "Memoriam beati Mychaelis archangeli toto orbe venerandam..."; including, f. 152, Assumption of the Virgin, rubric, *In assumptione beate marie virginis*; f. 158, Birth of Saint Augustine (28 August), rubric, *In natali beati Augustini*; f. 167, rubric, *De sancto michaele archangelis*; f. 178v, rubric, *In solemnitate omnium sanctorum*; f. 187, rubric, *In festo visitationis beate virginis*; f. 193, rubric, *In festo presentationis beate marie*.

Although erroneously described as a Breviary on the eighteenth-century title piece, this is in fact an Office Lectionary, a much rarer text comprising only the readings from the Breviary, that is the lections (or pericopes) and homilies to be read during monastic Office. It comprises the Temporal (Proper of Time) from the first Sunday in Advent (f. 1) to the 25th Sunday after Pentecost, and the Office of the Dedication of a Church; the Sanctoral, from the eve of Saint Andrew (f. 112) to the Feast of Saint Katherine a year later (f. 186).

The lections or readings from the Gospels, Prophets and Pauline Epistles are only a small portion of the text in the book. For each lection there are two or more homilies or sermons drawn from the Church Fathers. The author most often drawn on is Saint Augustine, who is profusely quoted. There are also significant numbers of homilies by Saint Gregory, Pope Leo I, and Saint Ambrose. Other authors found are Saint Jerome (ff. 118, 122, 164v etc.), Rabanus Maurus (f. 178v), Origen (f. 21v), and Bede (ff. 45, 102v, 117, 128v, etc.). These texts are used to explain or comment on the particular biblical text read in the lection.

The elegant initials, of acanthus, often with floral decoration on liquid gold grounds, painted at each of the major liturgical breaks, although not figurative, are products of the Ghent-Bruges school of illumination and resemble those issuing from the workshop of the Master of the Prayer Books of c. 1500. Copied in the favored Burgundian bâtarde script with ample calligraphic pen flourishing extending in the margins, text, decoration, and format suggest a high-quality production destined for a monastery, perhaps of Augustinian obedience, with the rare singling out of the Feast of the Birth of Saint Augustine and numerous readings from Augustine's

writings. Although an Office Lectionary is not a wholly uncommon text, it is rarer than, say, a Breviary, or a Missal, or even a Gradual, and must have been a special commission for a particular individual or purpose.

LITERATURE

Grégoire, R. *Homéliaires liturgiques médiévaux*, Spoleto, 1980.

Martimort, A. G. *Les lectures liturgiques et leurs livres* (Typologie des sources du Moyen Age occidental, 64), Turnhout, Brepols, 1992.

Palazzo, Eric. *Histoire des livres liturgiques. Le Moyen Age. Des origines au XIIIe siècle*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1993.

ONLINE RESOURCES

On Lectionaries

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09110b.htm>

On the Divine Office

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

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