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**Miniature Prayer Book**  
**In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment**  
**Germany, c. 1400-1450**

*i* (marbled paper) + 201 + *i* (marbled paper), (collation, *i-vi*<sup>8</sup> *vii*<sup>10</sup> [-3, f. 51, with loss of text, and -8, following f. 55, cancelled] *viii*<sup>8</sup> *ix*<sup>10</sup> *x*<sup>6</sup> *xi*<sup>10</sup> [-1, leaf before f. 82 with loss of text, -3, leaf before f. 83 with loss of text, -8, leaf following f. 88, cancelled] *xii-xx*<sup>8</sup> *xxi*<sup>8</sup> [through f. 168] *xxii*<sup>8</sup> [misfoliated, beginning f. 170] *xxiii-xxiv*<sup>8</sup> *xxv*<sup>12</sup> [-1, before f. 194, with loss of text, and -5, before f. 197, with loss of text]), modern foliation in ink, top, outer corner, recto, 1-203, f. 51 is missing, and f. 168 is followed by f. 170, no catchwords or signatures, written in a skilled, legible hybrida script on sixteen long lines, ruling indiscernible (justification 50 x 35 mm.), ELEVEN HISTORIATED INITIALS, with 12- to 7-line gold initials on notched maroon grounds, depicting saints (subjects below) drawn simply, usually dressed in maroon and orange with no shading, and with their attributes, on blue grounds, some with small gold dots, with bar borders, in top, bottom and outer margins, depending on position of the initial, not connected to the initial, formed of gold and red or blue, with large notches on one side, and with curled terminals, some with added decorative motifs; decorated initials, 10- to 6-line gold or blue initials, most infilled with bold floral or vegetal motifs in blue, red, orange, and green, on notched maroon grounds, most with similar bar borders, ff. 53v, 76, 82, 83, 89, 104v, and 13, 5-line parted blue and gold initial, f. 191, infilled and with red pen decoration with touches of green wash, and floral decoration, bottom margin; 5- to 6-line red or blue initials, with pen decoration in the other color including large beads, 3-line initials alternately red and blue, one-line initials within the text, alternately red and blue, red rubrics, majuscules within the text stroked with red. Bound, 18<sup>th</sup> century (?), in brown calf over pasteboard, blind-stamped with a center panel of intersecting double fillets forming diamonds, flanked by narrow bands stamped with intersecting lines formed from tiny round stamps and narrow panels of small floral decorative stamps, above and below, three raised bands, blue and red head and tail bands, edges dyed red, marbled endpapers. (In very good condition, with some discoloring and darkened folios). Dimensions (binding) 83 x 57 mm., (leaves) 76 x 50 mm.

This tiny portable prayer book is an eloquent witness to late medieval spirituality. It includes numerous prayers promising indulgences, as well as prayers offering protection from evils, both spiritual and temporal, and two forms of devotion to the Rosary. Although speaking to an unsophisticated theology, the text and its charming illustrations are evidence of a strong devotion and feeling for the Divine presence each hour of the day. The presence of a prayer before preaching suggests that the original owner was a priest.

**PROVENANCE**

1. The style of the script and decoration suggest the manuscript was made in Germany in the first half of the fifteenth century, see also the prayer, f. 25v, by Conrad, minister of Saxony; the

suffrages of Saints Quirinus, Catherine and Barbara (also included in the litany), would be likely in a book made in Germany (although it should be noted that these saints, like all the saints highlighted in this manuscript, were very popular throughout Europe);

2. Very faint note in lead point, bottom f. 189, possibly from an eighteenth-century owner?

3. No information of modern provenance except price in red, front flyleaf, verso.

## TEXT

ff. 1-8, [Preparation for the Mass] *Incipit preparamentum misse*, Deus in adiutorium meum intende ...; *Ym̃pnus*, Veni creator spiritus mentes ...; [followed by Psalms 83, 84, 85, 115 and 129, antiphon, Kyrie, and Pater noster, concludes with prayers:] Aures tue pietatis ... [the last prayer:] Conscientias nostras quesumus domine ...;

ff. 8-20v, [Prayers before Mass] *Oratio devota ante missa*, Unigenite fili dei ihesu Christi quis digne valeat .. in fonte miseracionis numquam manare cessabis. Amen; *Sequitur confessio ad christum ante missam dicenda*. Scio domine quia veritas es et veritatem doces ...; *Ante missam oratio*, Confiteor deo omnia peccata mea quecumque feci ab infancia mea ...; *Oraio*, Suscipe confessionem meam unica spes ...; *Oratio ante missam*, Conscientiam trepida domini ihesu Christi ...; *Oratio ante missam*, Ominipotens altissime rex et dominus ...; *Oratio ante missam*, O mirifice et novum conditor ...; *Oratio ante missam*, Veni pie domine ihesu veni quia ...;

ff. 20v-32, [Prayers after Mass] *Sequitur graciaram actio post missam*, Te deum laudamus, Te dominum confitemur, Te eternum partum omnis terra venerator, etc.; [prayer] Deus in adiutorium meum ...; Cantic of the three children (Daniel 3); Psalm 150 (cue only); Nunc dimittis ...; *Ant.* Trium puerorum cantemus hymnum quam cantabant in camino ignes ...; *Oratio*, Deus qui tribus pueris mitigasti flammam ignium ... Similar series of prayers to be said after Mass in San Marino California, Huntington Library, HM 1169, Book of Hours, use of Langres, France, late fifteenth century, art. 2]; [continues with prayers, including f. 24v] *Item clemens papa concessi omnibus sacerdotibus dicentibus hanc sequentem orationem post missam deuote ... et concessit xl dierum indulgentiam*, Obsecro te dulcissime domine ihesu christi ut passio tua sit mihi uirtus quia ...; [f. 25v-29] *Oratio et graciaram actio post missam fratris conradi ministri saxonie*, Eya deus meus misericordia mea ... et purgandos a purgatorio liberare digneris in eternum. Amen.; [continues with prayers, concluding] ... *Explicit graciaram actio post missam*,

ff. 32v-53v, [Morning Prayers and Others, many with rubrics describing the indulgences granted for saying the prayer] *Hanc sequentem orationem [lib..?] de mane legas et dices*, Deus in adiutorium meum intende; Domine ad; Pater noster [cues only]; Mane cum surrexio intende ad me ...; In manus tuas domine ...; [prayers, including:] f. 38 *Sequitur oratio sancti augustini a spiritu sancto sibi reuelata*. Quicumque eam devote legerit vel audierit aut circa se portauerit in illa die nec peribit nec in ignes nec in aqua nec in prelio nec in iudicio ... Deus propicius esto michi peccatori et sis custos mei omnibus ... [C. Wordsworth, ed., *Horae Eboracenses*, Surtees Society, 132 [1920], 125]; ... f. 45 *Quicumque deuote legerit sequentem orationem inspiciendo faciem Christi ille consequitur decem milia dierum indulgentiarum ...* Salve sancta faies nosri ...;

ff. 53v-73v, Suffrages of All Saints, Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Guardian Angel (*Sequitur oracio de proprio angelo*, Obsecro te O angelice spiritus in cuius custodia ego miserrime peccator traditus sum ...;

Versicle, Response, and Prayer, Omnipotens sempiterne deus que sanctum angelum ...), Saint Erasmus, Saint Sebastian, Saint Roch, Saint Quirinus, Saint Katherine, Saint Barbara, and Saint Apollonia;

ff. 73v-75v, [Prayers to be said before Preaching] *Sequitur oratio sancti anthonii de padua ante sermonem dicenda*, Lux mundi deus immense ....; *Alia oratio ante sermonem*, O fons vite verba ....;

ff. 75v-87v, [Prayers said at the Elevation of the Host, and other prayers, many with rubrics promising indulgences] Ave verum corpus natum de maria ...; *Sequitur oratio sancti augustini* ... Aspice ad me infelicem pietas ...; [concluding prayer:] Mundi creator et redemptor ihesu christen qui ad passionem iturus ...

ff. 87v-88v, [Prayers to say before going to bed] *Dormituro dicenda est hec sequens oratio*, Ihesu dulcisime, Ihesu pater dilectissime, Tu mecum queso maneas ...; [rubric attributing prayer to St. Augustine] Erige me famulum tuum domine qui semper erigis peccatores ...;

ff. 89-99v, [Rosary; five decades, each followed by the Pater Noster] *Incipit rosarium beate marie virginis*, Quam tu virgo castissima angelo Gabriele ...;

ff. 100-120v, [Prayers to the Virgin and St. Anne];

ff. 121-129, [Rhymed Rosary; five decades] *Sequitur aliud rosarium beate virginis*, Ave salve gaude/ vale O Maria no[n?] vernale/ Sed his rosis tibi tale ... *Ave*; Ave virgo sonsa nata/ Cristi mater sublimata ... *Ave* ...;

ff. 129-138v, [Prayers];

ff. 139-157, Penitential Psalms, followed by antiphon Ne reminiscaris domine delicta ..., and the Litany, including Quirinus among the martyrs, Benedict, Francis, Anthony, Dominic, and Bernard among the monks and hermits, and Catherine, Barbara, Clare, Anne, Ursula and Elizabeth among the Virgins; concludes with prayers.

ff. 157v-188v, [Prayers, some to be said at one's death] *Oraico pulcherrima ac devota*.... O vernante christi rose, super modum speciose, O ridente margarite ...

ff. 189-203v, [The Fifteen O's attributed to St. Bridget, followed by additional prayers] *Sequitur nunc quindecim orationes de passione domini revelata sancte Brigitte regine* ..., Ave dulcissime Ihesu ... *Oratio prima*, O Ihesu Christe aeterna dulcedo te amantium ... [ff. 202v-203v, very dark and rendered illegible.]

This tiny prayer book (measuring only 3 x 2 1/8 inches), is an eloquent witness to late medieval spirituality. It includes numerous prayers promising Indulgences, as well as prayers promising protection from evils, both spiritual and temporal. Although such beliefs may speak to an unsophisticated theology, they are evidence of a strong devotion and feeling for the Divine presence each hour of the day. It includes prayers to be said before and after Mass, at the Elevation of the Host, and before preaching, so it was most likely made for a priest. Note the

presence of suffrages of Saint Erasmus, who was a guardian against intestinal troubles (as well as a patron for women in labor), Saint Roch, guardian against the plague, and Saint Apollonia, guardian against toothache.

The practice of praying the Rosary predates this manuscript, but the presence of two written forms of the devotion is of interest. Many of the prayers include lengthy rubrics explaining how the prayers are to be used, their effectiveness, and sometimes their author; although not unique, the evidence of rubrics such as these deserve further study by historians of the late medieval church, as well as by social historians.

## ILLUSTRATION

The subjects of the eleven historiated initials are as follows:

f. 56, Saint Peter, tonsured, holding an open book and staff;

f. 57v, Saint Paul, holding book and sword;

f. 59, Angel;

f. 60v, the martyrdom of Saint Erasmus depicting his bowels being removed and coiled by a windlass, while a king and two onlookers watch;

f. 63, Saint Sebastian holding a banner and scepter;

f. 64v, Saint Roch holding a spike, with an angel in the bottom margin with a blank banderole;

f. 66v, Saint Quirinus holding a banner and dressed as a noble;

f. 68v, Saint Catherine holding a book and sword, with her wheel shown;

f. 70v, Saint Barbara next to her tower;

f. 72v, Saint Apollonia holding pincers;

f. 157v, Female Saint, protecting two smaller female figures.

The eleven historiated initials are simply executed; however, these images focus our attention effectively on the saint depicted, shown dressed in orange and dark red on dark blue grounds; the drapery and the figures are executed without modeling, but the faces are quite delicate. The use of illumination to enhance devotion has a long tradition in German manuscripts; compare the earlier fourteenth-century manuscript from Regensburg (?), Munich, SB, Clm 23232, a small format collection of hymns, with vivid devotional images (Florentine Mütterlich and Karl Dachs, *Regensburger Buchmalerei*, Munich, 1987, p. 92, no. 79).

## LITERATURE

Raitt, Jill, ed. *Christian Spirituality: The High Middle Ages and the Reformation*, New York, 1987.

Wilmart, A. *Auteurs spirituels et textes dévots du moyen âge latin*, Paris, 1932, reprint 1971.

Winston-Allen, Anne. *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages*, University Park, Pennsylvania, 1997.

## ONLINE RESOURCES:

Indulgences:

[www.newadvent.org/cathen/07783a.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07783a.htm)

Prayer-Books:

[www.newadvent.org/cathen/12350a.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12350a.htm)

The Fifteen O's of St. Bridget:

[www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Filius/StBrigid.html](http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Filius/StBrigid.html)