



Spotlight on the Middle Ages

Highlights of Italian illumination in the
Borromeo Offitiolo and various miniatures
on single leaves

Dr. Jörn Gunther Rare Books, Basel



Book of Hours with abbreviated psalter with 14 fine initials and 14 miniatures illuminated by Ambrogio de Predis for Francesco Borromeo.

Italy, Milan, before May 11th, 1474.
93 x 70 mm, 247 leaves.

The Borromeo accounts list payments for vellum, writing and illuminating this small Book of Hours ('Offitiolo' with 'Salmitti') and name the illuminator.



Ambrogio de Predis, a friend and colleague of Leonardo da Vinci, had been known as a panel painter, foremost as a fine portraitist. His work as a miniature painter is first documented in this precious, small manuscript, offering 14 miniatures, very carefully painted, with a great feeling for the smallest details.



As the leaves in this booklet are only 93 x 70 mm, the miniatures are even smaller: c. 50 x 40 mm. Their beauty and elegance display the great talent of this illuminator and panel-painter who also worked as an enameler.



St. Jerome as a hermit and with the lion. He is kneeling before a visionary Crucifix, represented in the form of a feathery tree.



Visitation, Flight into Egypt and Death, 3 of 14 miniatures in the Borromeo Hours. In the



text-scroll: *O mors quam amara est memoria.... O death, how bitter is the remembrance.*



INCIPIUNT CAPLIB. XVII

7 Recordatio di
 11 Oculi dñi retributo iustoru et uultu di nar
 13 rano impiorum
 15 Contemptio impiorum
 17 Uidua in cam lectum
 19 Fortia dñe mali predicatoris
 21 Cur dñs peccatores ex peccat
 23 De oculo sapien
 25 Et latone et depre tu maloru
 27 De celo et terra in resur rectione
 29 Questio uultu
 31 Tempus trinit
 33 Epof recte uiuere debet
 35 Principes gentiu angelos et questione pul
 37 Quomodo sic exerceat angelorum
 39 Solos humiles adiuuaret dei
 41 Omne nimiu uanum
 43 Saultu prius confundendu et postea docen
 45 Druos regu uel diu tu simili poenit subia
 47 Predicatoris dare et non profun de ppp teru
 49 simplices aliquando debere predicare
 51 Modu predicatoris
 53 Columpnas eccle
 55 Peru sup mare ambulante
 57 Caute de prudentia et fortuna dñe dei
 59 Consecrationes epou in quo uir cu predica ñ
 61 tione con corde
 63 Pui chram consolatione bonoru de psecutio
 65 nib; in quorum
 67 Ecce ual de peccatores diuina iudicia aliqdo
 69 diabolu pro ster nunt
 71 Tuba et conuerti

EXPLICIUNT CAP. XVII



INSERVIRA
 per noui uolumen eno dare misterium
 tipice expofitionis ad gredimur oportet

ut excus de uiri uel no mine uel passione
 significacione miseria principaliter pro
 feramus quatenus habita uoloz more
 du supseruptione uultu in ipso possit fronte
 perfignimus quia cuius e domus agnoscat
 securus intretur Crebro aut dixisse me
 memini qm beatus iob passione redeptoris
 nri eiusq; corporis id eccle et passione
 sua signauit e noie Job quippe interp
 tatur dolens Et quis alius in hoc dolente
 figuratur nisi is de quo scriptu e Uere
 langores nros ipse tulit et dolores nros
 ipse portauit De quo rur su dr Liure
 eius sanati sumus Amico uero cui heret
 coru tenent speciem qui ut sepe ia dixim
 du dm defendere intuntur offendit Scl
 eni uiri puul nera et uerba sic lo quat
 sua ut ea nra significet Et plerumq;
 p prophete ism uentura nar res pntia
 transtendat Nonnuqua uero sic de pntib;
 disserat ut de futuro conticefat Cognita
 itaq; discreationis huius cultu dia cu in no
 tuone uo cosit luf nra qm in ellegentia
 alter nec ut tanto uerius eius sensib; con
 gruat quanto se ena uocib; immutat
 Verbis itaq; pcedentib; scilicet p disscat
 prudentie arte sententias in q; cuius libet
 culpa p uirt et qua se id apnanda eius
 actio ex pres sit De cuius pena mox su
 bicat dicent Non sit in recordatione
 sed contetatur quasi lignu in fructu suo
 In recordatione eni conditoris n redudat
 quisq; ad fine uite se diuinit sub iugat
 Na si hunc supnus respectus memoria
 tangere pcul dubio ab iniquire et reuo
 caret Eius quippe merita exigunt ut
 funditus ab aueris recordatione de
 leatur Scendū uero quod recordari dñ
 ne qua qua p pte dr Quz eni obliuisci
 non potest quo pacto recordari potest
 Sed quia eos nos quoru recordamur
 amplectamur ab his aut quoru obliu
 semur elongamur humano huius ce
 recordari dr cu dona tribuit et obli
 uisci cum culpa derelinquit Sed quia
 cuncta pensat cuncta sine intermissione
 alternatione considerat et recordatur
 bonoz quoz tam nuqua obliuiscatur
 et nullatenus malo recordatur quos
 tamen pui dicitu semp in tucur Quasi eni
 redit ad bonoz memoria qua tam nuqua
 deseruit et quasi ne qua qua malo respicit

Decorated initial Q [uotiens] on a leaf from Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, in Latin. Northern Italy or Florence?, c. 1150-1175.

355 x 455 mm (leaf). Tempera and gold on vellum.



Bible leaf: Book of Kings I, the initial F presents Samson and the Lion. Italy, Bologna, c. 1270.

355 x 233 mm (leaf); 50 x 45 mm (initial).
 Tempera and gold on vellum.

ccxvii.

trinitatis fidem martinus con
 fessus est beatissimus gratiam ꝑ
 cepit. ꝑ Quare. Tuouae. ā. Ego
 signo crucis non clipeo protectus
 aut galea hostium cuneos pene
 trabo securus. ꝑ. Vgo. Tuouae. R.

Hic est martinus
 electus dei pon ti

trabo securus. ꝑ

St. Martin, in an initial *H* on a leaf from an Antiphonal. Italy, Venice, c. 1300.

351 x 241 mm (leaf), 66 x 68 mm (initial). Tempera and gold on vellum.

Notation left of the initial contains instruction for the illuminator. Few words were needed to indicate the tale of St. Martin known from the *Golden Legend*.



Christ in Majesty flanked by the Virgin and St. John, adored by five figures. Historiated initial A from an antiphonary, illuminated by Neri da Rimini. Italy, Rimini, c. 1300-1305.

193 x 182 mm (letter). Tempera and gold on vellum.



Clerical and worldly authorities of law. Opening miniature of the *Distinctiones*, cutting from a *Decretum Gratiani* manuscript, illuminated in the circle of Jacopino da Reggio. Italy, Bologna, c. 1300-1320.

205 x 105 mm. Tempera and gold on vellum.

Shaded faces in olive green and details such as a veil over architectural elements betray a Byzantine influence. This style is associated with the Bolognese illuminator Jacopino da Reggio.



St. Lawrence, initial L (detail), illuminated by Neri da Rimini. Italy, Rimini, c. 1305-10.

533 x 352 mm (leaf); 133 x 113 mm (initial). Tempera and gold on vellum.

Among the anonymous artists of the early Trecento the name Neri da Rimini stands out. He repeatedly signed and dated his works, enabling us to reconstruct his oeuvre (1300-1328). Our miniature was probably part of a choir book produced before Neri's great commissions of 1314.

St. Dominic with a Dominican nun.
Initial M from an Antiphonal,
illuminated by Niccolò di Giacomo da
Bologna. Italy, Bologna, c. 1370-1375.

225 x 170 mm (leaf). Tempera and gold leaf on
vellum.

Both fine and detailed portraits still
show Byzantine influences. A sister leaf
is preserved in Cambridge, Fitzwilliam
Museum, ms. 278b.



Deo patri sit gl[ori]a.
eiusq[ue] soli filio:
cū sp[iritu] paraclitico.
et nunc 7̄ imper
petuum. Am̄. an̄.



Seruite. Et o[mn]i. an̄.



Alleluia. psalm[us]



BEATUS VIR

Qui non abiit
in consilio impior[um]

et in uia peccator[um]
non stetit: et in
cathedra pestilē
tie non sedit.

Sed in lege d[omi]ni
uoluntas eius:
et in lege eius
meditabitur di
e ac nocte.

Et erit tanq[ua]m lig
num q[uo]d planta
tū est secus decū
sus aquar[um]: q[uo]d
fructū suū dabit
i[n] tēpore suo.

Et folium eius n[on]
defluet: et omnia
quęcūq[ue] faciet
prosperabuntur.

Non sic impij nō
sic: sed tanq[ua]m pul



God blessing and King David playing the psaltery at *B[ea]tus Vir* on a leaf from a Choir Psalter in Latin. Italy, Florence, attributed to Don Simone Camaldolese, c. 1380s.

514 x 382 mm (leaf), 128 x 138 mm (initial).
Tempera and gold on vellum.

The bright palette, luxuriant foliage, and various other features are characteristic for the work of the illuminator Don Simone Camaldolese.



Nativity in an initial P illuminated by
Don Simone Camaldolese.
Italy, Florence, 1388.

250 x 235 mm. Cutting from a gradual, tempera
and gold leaf on vellum.

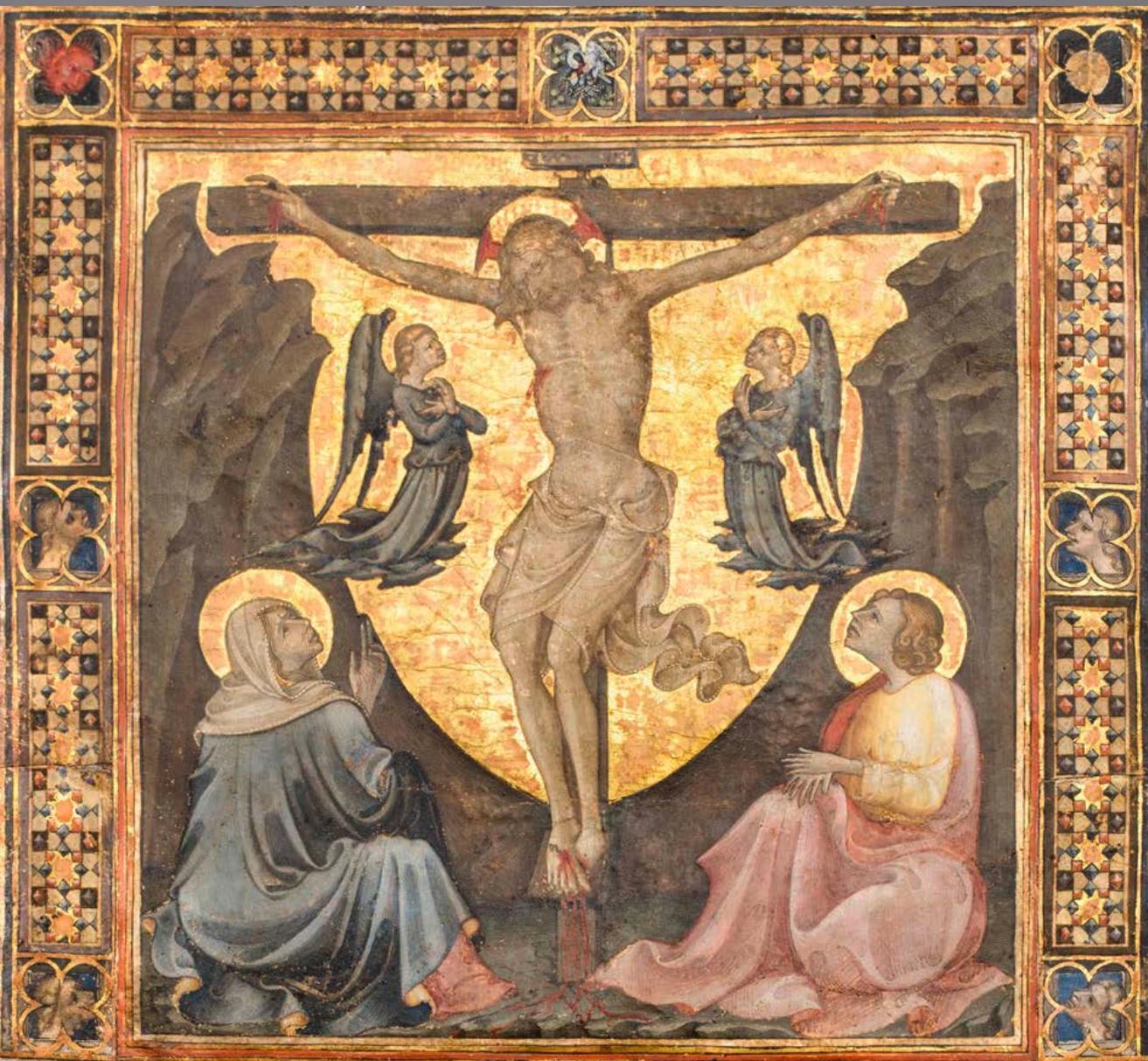
Don Simone Camaldolese came from
Siena, where he trained in the circle
around Lippo Vanni. He was mainly
active in Florence. Due to the large size of
this miniature, the parent manuscript
must have been one of the most
sumptuous choir books of Florence.



Trinity adored by the angelic hierarchy in the initial S, illuminated by an artist related to the Second Master of the Genesis. Italy, Padua, c. 1380-90.

590 x 412 mm (leaf), 164 x 125 mm (initial). Tempera and gold on vellum.

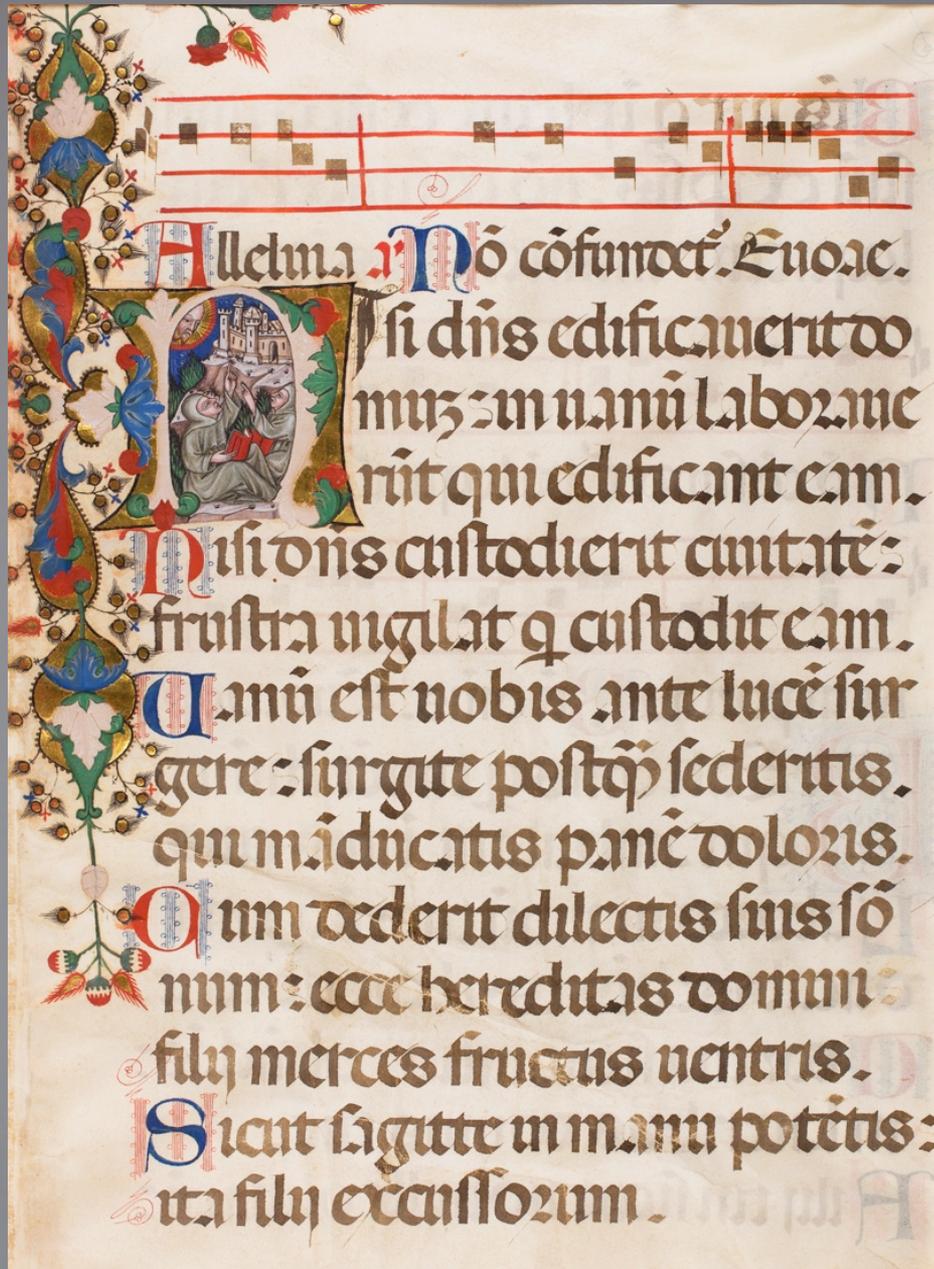
The illuminator was indebted to Giotto's interpreters in Padua and their painting of the last quarter of the 14th century.



Crucifixion. Canon miniature from a Missal, illuminated by Bartolomeo di Fruosino. Italy, Florence, c. 1420.

184 x 203 mm. Tempera and gold on vellum.

Bartolomeo was a pupil of Agnolo Gaddi (d. 1396) at Prato. From 1402 until 1438 he is recorded in the accounts of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence, where he worked with Lorenzo Monaco, and in the immediate circle of Fra Angelico.



Two Franciscans reading, initial N “*Nisi Dominus edificaverit domum ...*” Psalm 127 in a Franciscan choir Psalter, illuminated by Giovanni di Antonio da Bologna. Italy, probably Bologna or Ferrara, c. 1430-40.

564 x c. 410 mm (leaf), 88 x c. 82 mm (initial).
Tempera and gold on vellum.

Giovanni di Antonio was influenced by the art of Nicoló di Giacomo da Bologna. He was much appreciated at the Este court in Ferrara and in the wider region of Emilia-Romagna.

King David in prayer. Initial
N, cutting from a choir
book. Italy, Emilia Romagna,
Ferrara (?), c. 1455-60.

155 x 160 mm. Tempera and
burnished gold on vellum.

The figural style and the letter
decoration show close
parallels with the work of the
Fourth Master of Plutarch's
Vitae, to whom the
illumination is attributed.



tes. 7 ore te canētū. laude
ris i ppetū. **D**ñā p̄r p̄r.
Ad noc. i. Dñs defesor. ip̄. i. Alla.



Dominus illu
natio mea 7 salu
mea: quē time
bo. **D**ñs p̄tec
tor uite mee: aq̄

trepidabo. **D**ñi appropi
ant sup me nocētes: ut c
dat carnes meas. **Q**ui tri
bulat me inimici mei: ip̄i
infirmitati sūt 7 ceciderūt. **S**i
p̄sistat ad ūsus me castra:



David kneeling in prayer before God the Father. Historiated initial D on a leaf from a Psalter. Italy, Lombardy, c. 1460-70.

520 x 270 mm (leaf). Tempera and gold on vellum.

The leaf contains Psalm 27: “*Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea ...*”. The illuminator must have received his training in the vicinity of the Master of the *Vitae Imperatorum*, who was an appreciated artist at the court of Filippo Maria Visconti.

Resurrection, Initial R from a Gradual,
illuminated by Giovan Pietro Birago.
Italy, Brescia (?), c. 1470.

173 x 218 mm, tempera and gold on vellum.

The refined letter shows two dolphins rubbing noses. Here, traditions formed at the court of the Este in Ferrara merge with the art of illuminators in Lombardy. The miniature is attributed to Giovan Pietro Birago who is most famous for illuminating the Sforza Hours (today in London). He started his career working on choir books in Brescia in the 1470s.





King David playing music. Frontispiece from a Psalter with historiated initial *B*, illuminated by a Bolognese artist from the circle of the Master of 1446. Italy, Bologna, c. 1470.

552 x 365 mm (leaf), 180 x 155 mm (initial).
Tempera and gold leaf on vellum.

The richly decorated full borders present Franciscan saints and symbols; this points to a provenance in a Franciscan institution. The figural types allude to a follower of the Bolognese Master of 1446.



Christ calling Peter, in an initial S on a leaf from an Antiphonal illuminated by Pellegrino di Mariano. Italy, Siena, dated 1471.

530 x 380 mm (leaf), 170 x 170 mm (initial). Tempera and gold on vellum.

Commissioned by Niccolò Ricoveri, rector of the Spedale di Santa Maria di Scala in Siena. Pellegrino's art was much sought after.



Assumption of the Virgin, leaf from a choir book illuminated by Jacopo da Balsemo and workshop. Italy, Bergamo, c. 1480-1490.

495 x 360 (leaf), 155 x 140 mm (initial). Tempera and gold on vellum.

The Virgin is surrounded by angels in a golden glow. Four apostles are witnesses to the scene, two of which are represented in profile.



The Adoration of the Child, initial C from a Psalter, illuminated by Girolamo dai Libri. Italy, Verona, c. 1500-1510.

157 x 166 mm. Tempera and gold on vellum.

The present initial bears all the characteristics of Girolamo dai Libri's art. The ground in the shape of golden bricks is a frequent feature in this artist's works. His figural elegance and vast oeuvre of richly ornamented miniatures mark the peak of North Italian Renaissance illumination.

MACROBII AVRELIJ THEODOSII VIRI CONSVLARIS ET ILLVSTRIS SATVRNALIORVM LIBER.



Rimis mēsis post epulas iā remotis & discursim uariantibus poculis minutionibus: Prætextatus solet cibus iquit cū sumit tacitos efficere: potus loquaces. At nos & inter pocula silemus tāq̄ debeat seris uel etiā philosophicis carere tractibus tale conuiuū. Et Symmachus: Verum ne ita sentis Vecti: ut philosophia conuiuū interfit: & nō tāq̄ cēforia quædam & plus nimio

uerecunda materfamilias penetralibus suis contineatur: nec misceat se libero: cui etiā tumultus familiares sūt: cū ipsa huius sit uerecundia: ut strepitū nō modo uerborū: sed ne cogitationū qdē i sacranium suæ qetis admittat. Doceat nos uel peregrina institutio & disciplina a parthis petita: q̄ solēt cū cōcubinis nō cū cōiugibus inire cōuiuia: tanq̄ has & i uul-gus p̄duci & lasciuire quoq; illas nō nisi domi abditas tuen deceat tectū pudorem. An ego censeam producendam philosophiam: quo rethorica uenire ars & professio popularis erubuit? Isocrates enim græcus orator qui uerba prius libera sub numeros ire primus coegit: cum in conuiuio a sodalibus oraretur: ut aliquid in medium de eloquentiæ suæ fonte proferret: hāc ueniam deprecatus est. Quæ præfens inquit locus & tempus exigit: ego nō calleo. quæ ego calleo: nec loco præfenti sunt apta nec tempori. Ad hæc Eustachius: Probo Symmache propositum tuum: q̄ philosophiam ea quam maximam putas obseruatione ueneratis: ut tātum intra suum penetral existimes adorandam. Sed si propter hoc a conuiuū exulabit: procul hinc faceffant & alumnæ eius honestatē dico & modestiam nec minus cum sobrietate pietatem. Quam enim harum dixerim minus esse uenerabile? Ita fit ut ab eiusmodi coetibus relegatus matronarum talium chorus libertatem conuiuiorum solis concubinis id est uitii & criminibus abdicat. Sed absit: ut philosophia quæ i scholis suis sollicitè tractat de officiis conuiuialibus: ipsa conuiuia reformidet: tanq̄ nō possit rebus asserere: quæ solet uerbis docere: aut nesciat seruare modum: cuius i omnibus humana uitæ actibus terminos ipsa cōstituit. Neq; enim ita ad mensas inuito philosophiam: ut non se ipsa modere: cuius disciplina est rerum omnium moderationem docere. Vtergo inter te & Vectiū uelut arbitrari iudicatione componā: aperiam qdē philosophiæ tricliniorum fores. Sed spondeo sic interfutura: me mensuram notæ sibi ac sectatoribus suis dispensationis excedat. Tūc Futius: Quia te unicū Eustachi inquit sectatorem philosophiæ nostra ætas tulit: oratus sis ut

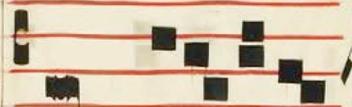


Initials N and P on two leaves painted by the Putti-Master, pen-and-ink with blue washes on a leaf from Macrobius' *In somnium Scipionis expositio. Saturnalia ...* Venice, printed by Nicolaus Jenson in 1472.

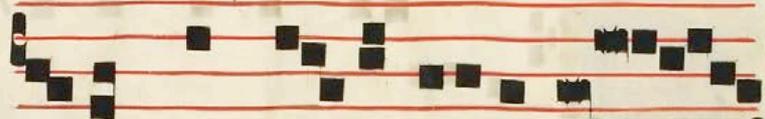
299 x 219 mm (leaf), c. 46 x 45 mm (initial), pen-and-wash on paper.



In abbato scō
No matutin'
In p. noc. an.



In pace i id



ipsū dormiā ⁊ reqescā Enonā

In invocare exau p.
dunt me dē iusticie m
e: i tribulatione dila

tasti mihi **M**iserere mei: ⁊ ex
audi orōnē meā **F**ilij hoīū
usq; quo graui corde: ut qd

Lamentation. Initial I and full borders,
leaf from an Antiphonal made for the
monastery of S. Giustina in Padua,
illuminated by Jacopo del Giallo.
Italy, Venice, 1538.

750 x 550 mm (leaf), 205 x 205 mm (initial).
Verso with one illuminated ornamental initial P.

Based on the Lamentation by Albrecht
Dürer (woodcut, *Passion Series*, 1507), only
slightly reducing the arrangement of
figures and landscape.



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