

# Commemorating the Virgin Mary at Barking Abbey: Cambridge, University Library, Dd.12.56

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**ABSTRACT.** *This article examines the unusual commemorative Office of the Virgin from Barking Abbey in a fifteenth-century book of hours, Cambridge, University Library, Dd.12.56 (hereafter Dd.12.56). As already evident in the Barking Ordinal, the nuns of this Abbey venerated Mary, one of their patron saints, with a weekly full three-nocturn, twelve-lesson Matins service. Dd.12.56, however, has only recently been linked to Barking Abbey and drawing on new material in this manuscript in correlation with others from the Abbey, I argue that the Barking nuns compiled a unique series of readings and responsories to honour Mary. The progression through the three nocturns of Matins articulates a Marian theology that intersects with the nuns' self-understanding and I demonstrate that they carefully crafted the lesser hours to highlight specific times of day and to complement Marian hymns sung at Barking. The accepted belief that books of hours were for personal devotion obscures the possibility that such books reflect communal liturgical practices, potentially serving multiple purposes within a monastic setting. Although Dd.12.56 dates from the fifteenth century, it may testify to a much older liturgical practice, which originated in the twelfth century when the three-nocturn format was still prevalent in Benedictine use and before it was largely replaced by a two-nocturn format in the thirteenth century. Benedictine tradition offered individual monastic houses the opportunity to craft this service. Dd.12.56 stands as a new and important testimony to the rich and imaginative ways in which the Barking community created, collated and curated materials that they steeped in their minds and hearts.*

The English Benedictine nunnery Barking Abbey, from its founding in c.666 to its dissolution in 1539, enjoyed a long and illustrious history of creative engagement with the liturgy. Barking's book culture has been the focus of several studies and the nuns of Barking are known both to have commissioned and authored liturgical and literary works.<sup>1</sup> The relatively recent attribution of Cambridge, University Library, Dd.12.56 (hereafter Dd.12.56),<sup>2</sup> a mid-fifteenth-century book of hours, to Barking Abbey expands the corpus of known liturgical works from Barking. Dd.12.56 provides full texts for the daily Hours of the Virgin and the weekly commemorative Office of the

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<sup>1</sup> See Jennifer N. Brown and Donna Alfano Bussell, *Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture: Authorship and Authority in a Female Community* (York, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Binski, Patrick Zutshi and Stella Panayotova, *Western Illuminated Manuscripts: A Catalogue of the Collection in Cambridge University Library* (Cambridge, 2011), 228–9.

Virgin as well as numerous texts for the early abbesses of Barking: Ethelburg, Hildelith and Wulfhild.<sup>3</sup>

Medieval monastics venerated the Virgin Mary in myriad ways including several major feast days, Lady Masses, a daily office and a weekly office that is the focus of this article. This weekly office developed during the twelfth century into a full, three-nocturn, twelve-lesson commemorative Office of the Virgin celebrated on Saturday in English Benedictine houses. However, by the thirteenth century, most houses had settled into a simpler two-nocturn, three-lesson structure. The nuns of Barking Abbey are among those who retained the more fulsome veneration into the fifteenth century as attested to by their ordinal dating from the first decade of that century.<sup>4</sup> New evidence offered by Dd.12.56, demonstrates that the nuns of Barking venerated their patron saint, Mary, through their own particular blend of lessons, responsories, hymns and antiphons, creating and performing offices that reflected and shaped the nuns' understanding and devotion.

Dd.12.56 records, on fols. 1r–82r, the texts for virtually all the readings, prayers, antiphons, responsories, psalms and versicles of both the daily and weekly offices of the virgin. Its contents can therefore be compared with and used to amplify existing evidence from the Barking Ordinal and Barking Hymnal to achieve a much more complete description of the liturgy at Barking.<sup>5</sup> Sally Roper reports only eight post-twelfth-century sources of English Benedictine practice that use a full, three-nocturn, twelve-lesson format for Matins, many of which (like the Barking Ordinal) indicate this practice but do not provide the full texts it requires.<sup>6</sup> Roper notes the opportunity for religious houses to create their own unique texts and music for the office.<sup>7</sup> The Barking Office of the Virgin in Dd.12.56 thus offers an unusual opportunity to examine the content of the full office as it was celebrated at Barking in the mid-fifteenth century, quite possibly the continuation of a much earlier practice. In this article I argue that the ordering of the lessons, the unique sequence of responsory chants and the unusual hymns and antiphons at the lesser hours all demonstrate the nuns' creative engagement with the office liturgy, as they moulded it into a theologically and musically rich experience that in turn shaped their lives.

<sup>3</sup> On chants for these local saints, see Anne Bagnall Yardley, 'Chants for the Holy Trinity of Barking Abbey: Ethelburg, Hildelith, and Wulfhild', in *Female-Voice Song and Women's Musical Agency in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lisa Colton and Anna Kathryn Grau, Brill's Companions to the Musical Culture of Medieval and Early Modern Europe (Leiden, 2022), 177–202.

<sup>4</sup> For an edition of the ordinal, see J.B.L. Tolhurst, ed., *The Ordinal and Customary of the Benedictine Nuns of Barking Abbey*, Henry Bradshaw Society, 2 vols. (London, 1927). Sally Roper's monograph on the English Benedictine weekly and daily offices in honour of Mary traces the development of the service, see Sally Elizabeth Roper, *Medieval English Benedictine Liturgy: Studies in the Formation, Structure, and Content of the Monastic Votive Office, c. 950–1450* (New York, 1993), esp. 93.

<sup>5</sup> Cambridge, Trinity College, O.3.54. The hymnal also dates from the fifteenth century. It can be viewed at <https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/O.3.54> (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Roper, *Benedictine Liturgy*, 104–5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

**Dd.12.56: layout and construction**

Dd.12.56 (titled *Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis*) is described in the 1867 catalogue of manuscripts in the Cambridge University Library as well as in the recent 2011 catalogue (where it is titled *Officium B.V. Mariae*).<sup>8</sup> The earlier of these two catalogues is the more complete, but neither gives a full listing of Dd.12.56's contents. It is in the 2011 catalogue that the manuscript is associated with Barking Abbey, based on its litany and prayers. Nigel Morgan has further confirmed the Barking origins of the book on the grounds of its litany and use of Roman psalm incipits, a known Barking practice, rather than the Gallican ones widely used in England at this time.<sup>9</sup>

Dd.12.56 is a small volume of 200 folios in twenty-six quires measuring 123 × 92mm with a writing area of approximately 90 × 55mm. Table 1 shows its contents and quire structure. The manuscript's first twenty-one quires form a continuous codicological unit, with new sections beginning in the middle of quires, while quires 22–4 and 25–6 constitute two additional, self-contained and distinct units. Basic design features, such as the two-line initials in blue ink with red pen-work flourishing and alternating red and blue letters for psalm verses, remain consistent throughout (see Figure 1). The first twenty-one quires are far from uniform, however, featuring multiple scribal hands, variation in the number of lines per page and the spacing on the page.<sup>10</sup> These observations strongly support the contention that the scribes intended to create a continuous manuscript but in several instances there are gaps at the end of a quire (e.g., fol. 66v) or the text has been stretched out on the last folio to fill up the space (e.g., fols. 82v and 120v). In other cases, an extra word or two has been interpolated under the last line on a quire (e.g., fol. 46v). Possibly the scribes were copying multiple quires simultaneously from an exemplar of a different size and thus estimated incorrectly. Altogether this volume looks like a group project undertaken by four to five scribes, quite possibly the nuns themselves.<sup>11</sup>

The contents of Dd.12.56 include the weekly and daily offices of the Virgin (here intertwined), the Office of the Dead, prayers for meals, the commendatory psalms

<sup>8</sup> *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge edited for the Syndics of the University Press*, vol. I (Cambridge, 1856), 498.

<sup>9</sup> Nigel J. Morgan, ed., *English Monastic Litanies of the Saints after 1100*, 3 vols. (London, 2012), 1: 11–12.

<sup>10</sup> The hands change throughout the manuscript. I note changes at fols. 25v, 60v, 67r, 76v, 79v, 82v, 83r, 91r, 101r, 104v, 107v, 113r, 121r, 145r, 167r, 183 and 185r. These are not all different individual hands but there are clearly distinct ones among them, including the opening hand, and the hands starting on fols. 67r, 121r, 167r and 185r. The book was clearly not made up of separate stand-alone *libelli* that were subsequently joined together, unlike other codices from Barking Abbey. See Katie Anne-Marie Bugyis, 'The Manuscript Remains of the Abbess-Saints of Barking Abbey', *Manuscripta*, 65 (2022), 1–53, for a discussion of two manuscripts that include *vitae* for St Ethelburg.

<sup>11</sup> The final section of the manuscript (quires 24 and 25, fols. 185r–199r) appears to be a distinctly later addition to the manuscript although is still in a Gothic bookhand. The possibility that this manuscript was copied by a group of nuns merits further investigation. On Benedictine women as scribes in earlier centuries, see Katie Ann-Marie Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns: The Ministries of Benedictine Women in England during the Central Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2019), 68–77. On the production of manuscripts by multiple scribes, see Jaakko Tahkokallio, 'Counting Scribes: Quantifying the Secularization of Medieval Book Production', *Book History*, 22 (2019), 1–42. Tahkokallio argues that, in aggregate, monastic libraries are likely to have a higher percentage of volumes with multiple scribes than secular collections.

Table 1. Structure and contents of Cambridge, University Library, Dd.12.56.

Quire no.	Folios	No. of lines per page	Contents
1	1r–7v	14	Hours of the Virgin (Matins)
2	8r–15v	Shifts to 15 on fol. 9r	Hours of the Virgin (Matins, continued)
3	16r–23v	15	Hours of the Virgin (Matins, continued)
4	24r–31v	15	Hours of the Virgin (Matins, continued)
5	32r–39v	15	Continuation of Te Deum, Daily Matins, Lauds
6	40r–47v	15	Lauds (continued)
7	48r–55v	14	End of Lauds, Hours of the Passion Lauds, Prime, Hours of the Passion (Prime), Terce
8	56r–66v	14	Terce, Hours of the Passion (Terce), Sext (2/3 of a page is blank but text continues into next quire)
9	67r–74v	15 (16 on fols. 69r–v and 72r–v)	Sext (continued), None, Vespers
10	75r–82v	14 (12 on fol. 82v)	Vespers (continued), Compline, Office of the Dead Vespers (starting fol. 82v)
11	83r–90v	14	Office of the Dead Vespers (continued), Matins
12	91r–98v	14/13/14	Office of the Dead Matins (continued)
13	99r–106v	15	Office of the Dead Matins (continued)
14	107r–112v	13	Office of the Dead Matins (continued), Lauds
15	113r–120v	14 (13 on fol. 113r and 12 on fol. 120v)	Office of the Dead Lauds (continued), Blessing before meals, prayers in chapter, hymn ( <i>Veni Creator Spiritus</i> )
16	121r–128v	14	<i>Veni Creator Spiritus</i> (continued), Psalm 53, Commendation of the Soul
17	129r–136v	14	Commendation (continued), gradual psalms with Marian antiphons
18	137r–144v	13	Gradual psalms (continued), hymns and antiphons for Lesser Hours
19	145r–152v	14	Antiphon (continued), prayers, penitential psalms
20	153r–160v	14	Penitential psalms (continued), litany
21	161r–166v	13	Litany and prayers
22	167r–174v	15	Commendatory psalm incipits with antiphons to Trinity and Barking saints, gradual psalm incipits with antiphons to Ethelburg, Memoriae (including Holy Cross)
23	175r–182v	15	Memoriae (continued, including Sts Erkenwald, Ethelburg, Hildelith and Wulfhild)
24	183r–184v	16	Memoriae
25	185r–192v	16	Preces, prayers, hymn ( <i>Ave sponsa</i> )
26	193r–200v	15	Prayers, silent prayers (ends fol. 199r)

and antiphons, the gradual psalms, the penitential psalms, the litany and a section with memoria to the Trinity and to the Barking saints (Ethelburg, Hildelith, Wulfhild and Erkenwald).<sup>12</sup> Dd.12.56 does not include a calendar, the gospel lessons and the two Marian prayers that are found in many books of hours. However, it otherwise fits comfortably within the conventional parameters for a 'book of hours', a scholarly category that encompasses a great deal of variation, with the Hours of the Virgin being the only constant.<sup>13</sup> While a book of hours is commonly referred to as 'a book for lay people', priests and monastics also owned and used these volumes.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of fols. 167r–184v and especially the chants in honour of Ethelburg, Hildelith and Wulfhild, see Yardley, 'Chants for the Holy Trinity'.

<sup>13</sup> On the development of the contents of English books of hours, see Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers 1240–1570* (New Haven, 2006), 3–22, esp. 4–7.

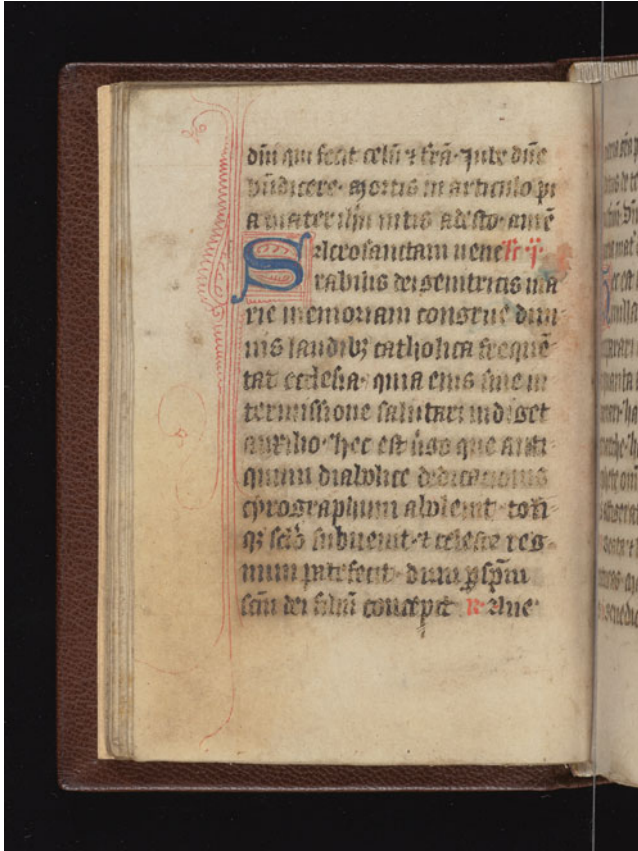


Figure 1. Cambridge, University Library, Dd.12.56, fol. 12v. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library. (colour online)

One of the unusual features of Dd.12.56 is its presentation of both the daily and the weekly Marian offices. Most books of hours include the daily hours of the virgin but, unlike Dd.12.56, not the commemorative office that was celebrated weekly in the monastic context. Matins for the weekly (Saturday) office is given first in Dd.12.56 (fols. 1r–32v), followed immediately by the antiphons, lessons and responsories for the daily office (fols. 32v–35r). The remaining hours are given with this material intertwined: the appropriate antiphons for both the weekly and the daily office in ordinary time as well as for seasonal variations are listed sequentially. Although the rubrics are generally instructive, there are places where it is difficult to disentangle with certainty the daily and weekly liturgies.

A volume of the size and composition of Dd.12.56 has many potential uses within a monastic context. It could be used within the communal recitation of the Hours of the Virgin and the Office of the Dead, for personal devotion and reading or for teaching these basic services to novices. Dd.12.56's small size would have allowed it to be carried easily from choir to chapterhouse. The most experienced nuns would surely have

memorised almost all the material in the manuscript. Barking had a rich literary culture, with a carefully described distribution of books at the beginning of Lent each year.<sup>14</sup> The nun who received Dd.12.56 each year had a wealth of texts to read in this portable volume. Although there is no musical notation in the volume, it is a thoroughly musical compilation, full of texts for sung responsories, hymns and antiphons, many of which are referenced in the ordinal. For a nun who participated regularly in the communal performance of these rites, the musicality of the words would have been evident. What, then, can this fifteenth-century book of hours tell us about the specific aspects of Marian theology that enriched the lives of the Barking nuns and the distinctive ways in which they made the commemorative office a unique vehicle of praise for their patron saint?

### The creation of the commemorative office

The adoption of a new office offered monastics an opportunity for collaborative creation and, as Roper contends, the introduction and evolution of the commemorative Office of the Virgin was no exception.<sup>15</sup> For the Barking community this would not have been a novel situation as they had already developed their own liturgies for their other patron, Saint Ethelburg.<sup>16</sup> Jean Leclercq suggests that the nature of monastic life fosters communal creative endeavours noting that ‘collaboration indeed presupposes anonymity, charity, humility, organization, and obedience’.<sup>17</sup> Through the lens of this understanding of monastic activity, the commemorative Office of the Virgin, as found in Dd.12.56, is testament to the Barking community’s creativity. An entire set of twelve unique responsories frame the twelve lessons of Matins during ordinary time.<sup>18</sup> The lessons themselves comprise a distinctive set compiled from both commonly circulated and unusual or unknown sources. A set of antiphons – virtually unknown elsewhere and discussed in detail later – frames the lesser hours, which also include the unique, Barking set of hymns used on Marian feast days. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it seems reasonable to presume that the nuns of Barking created, compiled and curated this office.

Although Dd.12.56 presumably testified to the practice at Barking in the mid-fifteenth century, it is not possible to know precisely when this form of the office became standard. Twelve-lesson Matins in English Benedictine sources are scarce

<sup>14</sup> The discussion of the distribution of books is found in the ordinal, see Tollhurst, *Ordinale*, 67–70. On this practice, see Anne Bagnall Yardley, *Performing Piety: Musical Culture in Medieval English Nunneries* (New York, 2006), 74–5.

<sup>15</sup> Roper, *Benedictine Liturgy*, 102.

<sup>16</sup> On the liturgy as a place of composition and creativity, see Anne Bagnall Yardley, ‘Liturgy as the Site of Creative Engagement: Contributions of the Nuns of Barking’, in *Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture: Authorship and Authority in a Female Community*, ed. Jennifer N. Brown and Donna Alfano Bussell (York, 2012), 267–82.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Leclercq, ‘*Otium monasticum* as a Context for Artistic Creativity’, in *Monasticism and the Arts*, ed. T.G. Verdun (Syracuse, 1984), 63–80, at 73. Leclercq is speaking here specifically of manuscript production but elsewhere discusses musical composition as one of the arts.

<sup>18</sup> The responsory after Lesson 12 [R21] uses a well-known antiphon, *Sancta maria succurre miseris*, for the first part of the respond but then adds to it. This use of this responsory at Barking is discussed later.

after the end of the twelfth century.<sup>19</sup> Roper has demonstrated that the office was quite stable at St Albans over the twelfth to fifteenth centuries with some seasonal alternatives having been added.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the Barking Ordinal and Hymnal – both also copied in the fifteenth century – undoubtedly contain many layers of liturgical change. This suggests that the basic contours and content of the commemorative office at Barking were plausibly developed in the twelfth century and that the version in Dd.12.56 may reflect a practice that dates back at least as far as the 1100s, including accretions and changes from the intervening 300-year period. It may also be assumed that the nuns of Barking regularly celebrated the commemorative Office of the Virgin on Saturdays communally and with music.<sup>21</sup> An instruction in the Barking Ordinal indicates that when the Feast of St Thomas fell on a Saturday, Matins of the Virgin was still observed but in a quiet, probably spoken, voice.<sup>22</sup> This relegation of the Office of the Virgin to a less important status due to the importance of the Feast of St Thomas is evidently the exception to the usual performance practice.<sup>23</sup>

### Matins

Matins of the commemorative office served as a principal repository for the Marian theology that shaped the nuns' understanding of the Blessed Virgin. At Barking, the eight lessons for the first and second nocturns remained constant throughout the entire liturgical year, reflecting basic tenets of medieval beliefs about Mary. The Barking community's choice of these readings, and the creation of responsories to exegete the texts, presented a communal understanding of the mother of Jesus. The constant repetition of these texts, week in and week out, undoubtedly embedded the images and ideas in the nuns' minds and hearts.<sup>24</sup> Table 2 outlines the contents of the Saturday Matins service during ordinary time. The Appendix presents the full text of the lessons and responsories, with notes on other extant sources. In the discussion that follows, I examine the texts for each of the three nocturns in order to highlight the particular framing of Marian theology enacted weekly at Barking.

<sup>19</sup> The daily office found in Dd.12.56 corresponds closely with the same office found in a psalter from Wherwell Abbey, another Benedictine house (Cambridge, St Johns College, C. 18 (68), fols. 235r–238r). I am indebted to Katie Bugyis for sharing her diplomatic transcription of these folios with me. On the relationship of this manuscript to the knights templar, see Katie Ann-Marie Bugyis, 'Made for a Templar, Fit for an Abbess: The Psalter, Cambridge, St John's College, MS C.18 (68)', *Speculum*, 95 (2020), 1010–50.

<sup>20</sup> Roper, *Benedictine Liturgy*, 110.

<sup>21</sup> The ordinal indicates that when the office could not be celebrated on Saturdays it was moved to an earlier day of the week, although that day is not specified. See, for example, Tolhurst, *Ordinale*, 245: 'Si festum eorum super sabbatum acciderit, teneatur de illis modo quo predictum est et beata maria superius in ebdomadada suum habeat seruicium.' Similar instructions are found in various places throughout the ordinal.

<sup>22</sup> Tolhurst, *Ordinale*, 175: 'et dicantur ibi matutine sancte marie cum suffragiis, adinuicem submissa uoce'.

<sup>23</sup> An early mention of the Office of the Virgin from St Albans sources suggests that around 1200 the monks sang Matins by heart without candles. *Ibid.*, 97–8.

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Hours of the Virgin, see Rachel Fulton Brown, *Mary and the Art of Prayer: The Hours of the Virgin in Medieval Christian Life and Thought* (New York, 2018). The Use of Rome, with a different set of readings, is the basis of Fulton's discussion of the daily Hours of the Virgin (see 539, n. 4).

Table 2. Matins of the Saturday Office of the Virgin in ordinary time in Cambridge, University Library, Dd.12.56.

Function	Incipit
Opening	<i>Domine labia me aperies</i>
Psalm 3	<i>Domine quid multiplicavi</i>
Invitatory	<i>Adoremus deum et hominem</i>
Invitatory	<i>Ave maria gratia plena</i>
Psalm 94	<i>Venite</i>
Hymn	<i>Quem terra pontus</i>
<b>First nocturn</b>	
Antiphon	<i>Dignare me laudare</i>
Psalms	8, 18, 23, 44, 45, 47
Lesson 1	<i>Sacrosanctam venerabilis dei</i>
Responsory [R1]	R. <i>Ave maria V. Natus de te</i>
Lesson 2	<i>Hec est sola</i>
Responsory [R2]	R. <i>Beata et benedicta V. Benedicant te omnia</i>
Lesson 3	<i>Hec est domina regum</i>
Responsory [R3]	R. <i>O maria sole splendidior V. Omnium deo coniuncior</i>
Lesson 4	<i>O alma virgo maria</i>
Responsory [R4]	R. <i>O singularis rerum augusta V. In te omni decore</i>
<b>Second nocturn</b>	
Antiphon	<i>Sicut letancium omnium nostrum</i>
Psalms	84, 86, 95, 96, 97, 98
Lesson 5	<i>O sacratissima virgo maria</i>
Responsory [R6]	R. <i>Hec est ancilla domini V. Deus in forma dei</i>
Lesson 6	<i>Nosci domina beatissima virgo</i>
Responsory [R8]	R. <i>Sancta maria regina celorum V. Spes laysorum consolacio</i>
Lesson 7	<i>Sancta maria virgo semper</i>
Responsory [R10]	R. <i>Beata dei genitricis V. Eius laudes frequentat</i>
Lesson 8	<i>Beata dei genitrix virgo maria</i>
Responsory [R12]	R. <i>Congratulamini mihi omnis V. Memoria mea in generatione</i>
<b>Third nocturn</b>	
Antiphon	<i>Gaude maria virgo cunctas</i>
Canticle	<i>Audite me divini fructus</i>
Canticle	<i>Gaudens gaudebo in domino</i>
Canticle	<i>Non vocaberis ultra derelicta</i>
Gospel	<i>In illo tempore factum est</i>
Lesson 9	<i>Magne devocionis et fidei</i>
Responsory [R15]	R. <i>Intacta virginitate et illesa V. Observatur os blasphemium</i>
Lesson 10	<i>Et nos igitur extollamus</i>
Responsory [R17]	R. <i>Virgo incomperabilis non est dolor V. Merito conregnas</i>
Lesson 11	<i>Vere beata parens</i>
Responsory [R19]	R. <i>Ego fructificavi in dei filio V. Spiritus meus super mel</i>
Lesson 12	<i>Pulcre salvoator attestacioni mulieris</i>
Responsory [R21]	R. <i>Sancta maria succurre miseris V. Ave maria gratia plena</i>
Canticle	<i>Te deum laudamus</i>

### The first nocturn

The antiphon that frames the six psalms of the first nocturn during ordinary time, *Dignare me laudare*, originates in the Feast of the Assumption and asks the Virgin's permission to offer her praise.<sup>25</sup> At Syon Abbey, the Brigittine house established in 1415,

<sup>25</sup> Dd.12.56, fol. 12r. CANTUS 002217: 'Dignare me laudare te virgo sacrata da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.'



this antiphon is said before Matins actually begins.<sup>26</sup> This antiphon provides a fitting opening to the first nocturn, seeking approval for the office that follows.

The four lessons of the first nocturn, which match those in the earliest English sources of the commemorative Office of the Virgin, connect Barking to the English Benedictine tradition.<sup>27</sup> By contrast, the responsory chants in Dd.12.56 diverge from those more commonly associated with this office. One responsory chant is specified for each of the four lessons of the first nocturn, as well as an incipit for an alternative responsory after the fourth lesson during Eastertide.<sup>28</sup> None of these four responsories is found in the earlier Benedictine sources as examined by Roper, nor do they appear in the CANTUS database. They do match exactly the information for the commemorative office in Advent in the Barking Ordinal.<sup>29</sup> Thus, not only the lessons but also the responsories are unchanging throughout the year, forming the bedrock of the nuns' Marian devotion.

The lessons and responsories in the first nocturn testify to the permanent and revelatory power of Mary: her greatness, and her glory as the pinnacle of God's creation. The universal church, the patriarchs and the prophets all join in this chorus of praise. Mary's symbiotic relationship with God is stressed, as in the first responsory 'Ave maria' [R1], when the ubiquitous 'Hail Mary' is followed by 'born in you and remaining in you forever'. The opening lesson, *Sacrosanctam venerabilis*, emphasises the propriety of praying to Mary for help, identifying her as the one who overcame the initial sin of humanity. This understanding of Mary as the new Eve dates to the earliest centuries of the church.<sup>30</sup> *The Myroure of Our Ladye*, a volume from the Bridgettine English house at Syon Abbey, offers us an understanding of how a fifteenth-century English nun might have understood this theological concept in its description of the meaning of 'Ave':

AVE MARIA. Thys salutacyon ys taken of the gospel of the gretynge of the aungell Gabryel. and of Elyzabeth. & yt was the begynnyng of oure helthe. And, therefore thy worde Aue. Spelled bakwarde. is Eua. for lyke as Eues talkynge with the fende was the begynnyng of oure perdyction. so oure ladyes talkynge with the aungel when he gryte her with thys Aue. was the entre of oure redempcyon. And so Eua is turned in to Aue.<sup>31</sup>

This understanding of the relation between Mary and Eve parallels the understanding of Christ as the new Adam, a commonplace of typological biblical interpretation that

<sup>26</sup> John Henry Blunt, ed., *The Myroure of Our Ladye*, Early English Text Society (Millwood, NY; repr., 1973), 80. The Brigittine liturgy focused completely on Mary with a different liturgy for each day of the week but very little change for feast days.

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix, where lessons are numbered and each responsory is assigned an identificatory number, e.g. [R1].

<sup>28</sup> The Easter responsories (after the fourth, eighth and twelfth lessons) are given as incipits only. They are listed in the Appendix but not otherwise discussed here.

<sup>29</sup> Tolhurst, *Ordinale*, 169.

<sup>30</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven, CT, 1996), 39–52.

<sup>31</sup> Blunt, *Myroure of Our Ladye*, 77–8.

undergirds many aspects of Marian theology. The first lesson, even in its brevity, resonates with this understanding of Mary's power and with the constant repetition of 'Ave maria' throughout the liturgy, and this is further emphasised by the first responsory. The second and third lessons focus on Mary's many attributes to emphasise her greatness. This enumeration of the superlative qualities of Mary is a common trope, the recitation of which is a devotion in itself as indeed we see in Marian litanies of the period.<sup>32</sup> Here the list ends in Lesson 3 with the assertion that from Mary 'flows the beginning of salvation'. The responsories, *Beata et benedicta* and *O maria sole splendidior* [R2 and R3], which follow these lessons further expand this praise declaring in the second responsory that Mary is 'blessed and praised above all creatures'. Not to be outdone, the third responsory praises Mary as 'more splendid than the sun, higher than the sky, surpassing the excellence of the heavens'. These responsories are the collective response to the individual reading of the lessons.

Having focused on these stellar qualities of Mary, the believers now turn, in the fourth lesson, to request Mary's aid to pray for them, cleansing their blind eyes and showing them the path of justice. The responsory *O singularis rerum* [R4] that sums up this nocturn includes the verse 'In you, with every grace perfected, God rested from his works'. Here, the reference to the sabbath seems particularly appropriate for this liturgy, which was enacted weekly on Saturday.<sup>33</sup> The four responsories in this nocturn are seemingly unique to Barking and particularly apt for the lessons they follow. Throughout this first nocturn the worshipper announces the greatness of Mary and steepers herself in these images of Mary upon whom she can call for help and mercy.

### The second nocturn

The psalms of the second nocturn are framed by the antiphon *Sicut letancium* identifying Mary as the place of 'all our rejoicing'.<sup>34</sup> The fifth lesson, which is linked to the fourth in many sources, contains an almost credal statement. It specifies that, by believing in Mary as the progenitor of God, the believer rejoices that 'through you the salvation of peace came to us'. The sixth lesson expands the earlier claim that Mary erased the sin of Eve, therefore rejoicing that 'the contagion of our sins ... has been cancelled'. The seventh lesson focuses on the bodily aspects of Mary as the vessel through which Christ was born and nourished, and by which she serves as both a model of modesty and a mother. The opening recitation of Mary's characteristics emphasises her conventional medieval attributes as temple and chamber. The passage continues by connecting the nursing of Christ by Mary to the food received by Christians through Christ.

<sup>32</sup> A contemporary example of this is the abcedarian Marian litany found in Winchester College 48, a fifteenth-century book of hours belonging to a priest. See Jesse D. Mann and Anne Bagnall Yardley, 'The Prayer Life of a Fifteenth-Century English Priest: Winchester College MS 48', *Sacris Erudiri*, 58 (2019), 231–4 and plate II.

<sup>33</sup> On why Mary is celebrated on Saturdays, see Louis Gougaud, *Dévotions et pratiques ascétique du moyen âge* (Paris, 1925), 65–73, esp. the discussion of sabbath rest on 68–9.

<sup>34</sup> Dd.12.56, fol. 20v. CANTUS 004936: 'Sicut letancium omnium nostrum habitacio est in te sancta dei genitrix.' In the CANTUS database, this chant is associated with the Feast of the Purification, but it was not sung on that feast at Barking.

Mary is both ethereal and earthly, reigning in heaven and suckling her child. Indeed, the nuns at Barking prayed that all of them might become ‘temples to Christ’s indwelling’, so this lesson resonates with their vocation as nuns as well.<sup>35</sup>

In the final, eighth, lesson of this nocturn the worshippers petition Mary for her help in beseeching God on their behalf, concluding: ‘Let all feel your solace who with devotion celebrate the memory of your glorious praise.’ This lesson effectively sums up the intercessory purpose of worshipping Mary and is a fitting conclusion to this nocturn. In the Barking liturgy, these first eight lessons recurred as a unit throughout the entire year in the commemorative office.

Unlike the first nocturn, the second nocturn offers two alternative responsory chants for each lesson as well as a third option (incipit only) for the final responsory during Eastertide. These responsory chants exegete the lessons in two distinct ways. The responsories for ordinary time/Advent, again apparently unique to Barking, are specifically framed to connect with imagery from the consecration service for nuns as well as to reflect on the act of praising Mary. The responsory after the fifth lesson, *Hec est ancilla* [R6], resonates with the chant *Ancilla Christi sum* sung by the nuns in the consecration service.<sup>36</sup> Both the nuns and Mary are handmaidens of the Lord. Similarly, in the responsory after the seventh lesson, *Beata dei genitricis* [R10], the imagery of Mary as a bride again connects with the nuns’ vocational understanding of themselves as brides and explicitly invokes the Saturday context in which the responsory is sung: ‘Blessed bride, bearer of God, keep the sabbath rest rightly.’ The second nocturn ends with a responsory, *Congratulamini mihi omnis* [R12], in the voice of Mary: ‘Rejoice with me all you who love God because from my innermost parts I brought forth God and man.’ And here, at Mary’s specific request, the nuns sing and rejoice with her as the second nocturn comes to an end.

The second set of responsories in this nocturn, intended for the period between Christmas and the Feast of the Purification, are, unsurprisingly, focused on the birth of Jesus. They are all commonly used chants for Christmas or its octave.<sup>37</sup> All but one of them reference parts of Mary’s body: *gremium* (lap, bosom), *uterum* (womb), *viscer* (flesh), *uber* (breast) and *auris* (ears). It is the willingness to bear God in her body that is Mary’s defining characteristic during the Christmas season and this emphasis is found throughout the responsories. Although the texts of the lessons remain the same, the experience of the nuns singing this second nocturn changes depending on

<sup>35</sup> See Nicole R. Rice, ‘“Temples to Christ’s Indwelling”: Forms of Chastity in a Barking Abbey Manuscript’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 19 (2010), 115–32, on a fifteenth-century devotional manuscript that bears the names of two nuns of Barking. Rice discusses ways in which virgins, widows and chaste wives are all gathered under the umbrella of chastity (see esp. 124).

<sup>36</sup> On the use of the term *ancilla* at Barking, see *ibid.*, 121–2. Rice notes a distinction in the service of consecration between *puella* for virgins and *ancilla* for widows. Both virgins and widows sang the antiphon *Ancilla christi sum* after *Veni creator spiritus*. Tolhurst, *Ordinale*, 354.

<sup>37</sup> Because the ordinal does not specifically list the Matins responsories for Christmas, it is not possible to tell exactly how these chants were used at Barking. The ordinal merely refers to the antiphony. The chants in question are CANTUS 007569, 006167, 006171m and 007756. The gospel passage is listed as ‘*Missus est cum expositione Exordium*’. It seems likely that this is a reference to Bede’s homily 48 based on Luke I and beginning ‘*Exordium nostrae redemptionis*’. See Bede Venerabilis, *The Complete Works of the Venerable Bede, In the Original Latin*, 8 vols. (London, 1843), 5: 360.

the season with the emphasis in the period from Christmas through Purification on the role of Mary in the birth of Christ and through the rest of the year on Mary as a prototype of the nun, a bride and a handmaid giving praises.

### The third nocturn

The lessons in the third and culminating nocturn of Matins usually relate to the gospel reading in that nocturn. In Dd.12.56, the gospel passage given is Luke 11:27 and is the passage usually referred to as *Loquente ihesu* although in Dd.12.56 it actually begins *In illo tempore*: 'While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!"' Jesus's reply – 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!' – is also germane to the lessons although it is not read as part of the gospel.<sup>38</sup>

The gospel passage is, as read, a testimony to Mary by the unnamed woman in the crowd and, by extension, by the nuns. The lessons for this third nocturn are from *Magne devotione*, a homily on the passage by the Venerable Bede (c.672–735). The use in the commemorative office of this homily by Bede is not unique to Barking Abbey. The lessons in the final nocturne in both a twelfth-century psalter (BnF lat. 10433, possibly a gift to Henry II for his coronation) and the twelfth-century St Albans Breviary (BL Royal 2.A.x) are drawn from Bede's homily.<sup>39</sup>

The responsory texts for ordinary time in this nocturn again pair well with the readings. The ninth lesson emphasises the faith of the woman in the crowd and, in Bede's view, thereby condemns 'the faithlessness of future heretics'. The responsory *Intacta virginitate* [R15], sung in the voice of Mary, stresses her chastity in bearing an all-powerful life. The verse adds 'The mouth/word of blasphemy is marked', tying into Bede's contention that Mary called out the blasphemers.

In the tenth lesson, Bede calls on the universal church to praise the woman who had the courage to speak out from the crowd to praise Mary. In response to the reading, the nuns sing *Virgo incomperabilis* [R17]: 'Incomparable virgin, there is no sorrow like your sorrow in the passion of your son. There is no joy like your joy in his resurrection.' This is followed by a verse that says that Mary reigns with 'the one with whom you suffer'. Here the focus is on the relationship between Jesus and Mary, and the privileged position that she holds as his mother, through her merit. The eleventh lesson continues the focus on Mary and the following responsory, *Ego fructificavi* [R19], is focused on the sweetness and delight of being the mother of God.

In the last sentence of the twelfth lesson, Bede offers a final warning to the nuns that they should listen and observe the word of God, unlike the Jewish heretics. Thus, throughout the year (except during Advent), the nuns at Barking heard this passage weekly during the commemorative office, as the final word of the twelve lessons. By

<sup>38</sup> NRSV, Luke 11:27–8.

<sup>39</sup> On the lessons in BnF lat. 10433, and specifically the trope of anti-Semitism in these lessons, see Kati Ilnat, *Mother of Mercy, Bane of the Jews: Devotion to the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Norman England* (Princeton, 2016), 51–4.

extension, the passage points the nuns to avoid such other potential heresies as Lollardy as well.<sup>40</sup> The nuns then sing a responsory associated with the Feast of the Assumption, *Sancta maria succurre miseris* [R21]. At Barking this responsory is sung at Vespers for the Feast of the Assumption with the prose *Beatissimam me* as well as at Matins as the final responsory without a prose (*sine prosa*).<sup>41</sup> Often this text appears as an antiphon,<sup>42</sup> but here it is expanded into a responsory with the addition of the phrase 'let all feel your solace who celebrate your memory'. This chant ends Matins with a final plea for intercession, especially for devout women, and a final description of the commemorative office, celebrating Mary's memory. These responsories for ordinary time again form a framing of the lessons that is unique to Barking.

The second set of responsories offered in the third nocturn [R16, R18, R20 and R22] focus more concretely on the words of the woman in the crowd. Mary's womb is referenced in each responsory text, and her chastity is the main focus. In their bodily emphasis they echo the responsories in the second nocturn. The final responsory, *Nesciens mater* [R22], embodies this approach. Thus, as the nuns journey through the three nocturns of the commemorative office, they move from the praise of Mary by the universal church, through credal statements about Mary to an understanding of Mary as the prototype of correct belief. In some sense, the enactment of this office weekly is both orthopraxis and orthodoxy: it is the action of praising Mary with the statement of their beliefs about her.<sup>43</sup>

### The lesser hours

The preceding examination of the Matins service has revealed several distinctive aspects of the Barking liturgy. In the other monastic hours, the most unusual material appears in the lesser hours. There are two features that especially distinguish the commemorative office celebrations of Prime, Terce, Sext and None at Barking Abbey: the hymnody and the antiphons. Hymnody at the lesser hours usually consists of the same hymn (frequently *Memor salutis auctor*) for all four hours and Barking followed this practice for the daily office. This hymn, sung four times a day, initially addresses God as the author of health but then calls upon Mary to be present at the time of death.

However, for the weekly office, Barking uses a set of four hymns that are also sung at the corresponding office on all the major Marian feast days and appear in the

<sup>40</sup> Although there were no Jewish communities in England after the expulsion of 1290, the trope of the Jew as heretic continued. Among the remaining items from Barking's library is a manuscript (BL add. 10596) that contains Wycliffite translations of the book of Tobit and the book of Susanna indicating that Barking was not exempt from the Lollard influence. See John Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1995), 109. On depictions of Jews in medieval England, see Anthony Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms, 1350–1500* (Cambridge, 2006), esp. the discussion of Benedictine book culture at 17–19.

<sup>41</sup> Tolhurst, *Ordinale*, 279.

<sup>42</sup> CANTUS 004703.

<sup>43</sup> The service for daily Matins follows immediately after the commemorative service in Dd.12.56. The nuns are reminded daily of Mary's role as *reparatrix*, *mater* and intercessor. As noted earlier, it seems likely that this service also comes from the twelfth century.

Barking hymnal in the appropriate place for the Feast of the Assumption.<sup>44</sup> These hymns offer a framing for the lesser hours that is, again, unique to Barking, giving a more specific focus to each hour. The hymn for Prime, *Regina celi precluem*, is a hymn of praise to Mary – ‘Let all the multitude of the faithful praise the queen of heaven’ – who is the mother of God. The doxological verse, like the verses for the other hymns, praises the Trinity who through Mary saves us.

In contrast to the hymn for Prime, the hymn at Terce (*Matrem per integerrimam*) is an exuberant hymn inserting a refrain at the end of each line.<sup>45</sup> The refrain text, ‘Fulget dies ista celebris’, is added only partially at first and then presented in full at the last line of each stanza:

Matrem per integerrimam *fulget dies*  
 Opem ferens celerrimam *fulget dies ista*.  
 Dissolve christe vincula *fulget dies*  
 Que nostra nectunt crimina *fulget dies ista celebris*.  
 Gloria tibi domine *fulget dies*  
 Qui natus es de virgine *fulget dies ista*  
 Cum patre et sancto spiritu *fulget dies*  
 Et sempiterna secula *fulget dies ista celebris*.<sup>46</sup>

The refrain transforms the hymn from a single verse (plus doxology), underlining Mary’s agency in providing Christ to redeem our sin with a joyful reminder to ‘let this celebrated day shine’, a festal proclamation on Saturday and feast days. As Mary Channen Caldwell notes, ‘the musico-poetic complex signaled by “Fulget dies” functions as a marker of festivity, representing a strategy by which to expand and ornament the liturgy of the office’.<sup>47</sup> The presence of the refrain form indicates that this hymn may well be a later, thirteenth-century addition to the office.<sup>48</sup>

Terce is provided with an additional hymn, listed without a rubric in Dd.12.56 but corresponding to the hymn given in the ordinal for Terce during Eastertide. *Te sanctam*

<sup>44</sup> In the hymnal, these hymns appear on fols. 33v–35r between hymns for the Feast of St Lawrence (10 August) and the Feast of the Beheading of John the Baptist (29 August). The exception to this practice is the Feast of the Purification, which uses *Reginam celi*, *Corde natus*, *Psallat altitudo* and *Tu senes* for the lesser hours. The texts in the hymnal agree closely with those in Dd.12.56 with only a few minor spelling variants.

<sup>45</sup> The basic hymn text appears as a verse of the hymn *Quem terra pontus* in the eleventh-century manuscript BL Harley 2961 (fol. 231v). [www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley\\_ms\\_2961\\_fs001r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_2961_fs001r) (accessed 11 May 2021). It does not, however appear as a verse in *Quem terra* in the Barking sources. The use of ‘fulget dies ista celebris’ as a refrain is evident in *Castitatis lilium effloruit* where it appears at the end of each verse of a *Benedicamus Domino* chant. See Guido Maria Dreves, *Cantiones et muteti. Lieder und motetten des mittelalters*, Analecta hymnica Medii Aevi 20–21, 45b (Leipzig, 1895), 223. On the use of refrains in the *versus*, see Richard Crocker, *A History of Musical Style* (New York, 1966), 48–51. On ‘Fulget dies’, see Mary Channen Caldwell, ‘Troping Time: Refrain Interpolation in Sacred Latin Song, ca. 1140–1853’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 74 (2021), 91–156, esp. 117–20.

<sup>46</sup> See fol. 34r–v at <https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/O.3.54/UV#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=72&r=0&xywh=2708%2C-1%2C8367%2C4310> (accessed 16 July 2021).

<sup>47</sup> Caldwell, ‘Troping Time’, 116. Although Caldwell surveys use of the refrain prior to 1500, her remarks resonate with the usage at Barking. While refrains can be used as mnemonic devices, it seems more likely that the foregrounding of festivity is the more important function in this context.

<sup>48</sup> Caldwell, ‘Troping Time’, 119. In private correspondence, Dr Caldwell placed the likely date for this refrain to appear in a hymn in England around 1230 (email correspondence, 28 January 2022).

*dei genitrix* is also referenced in the ordinal for the services in the week following the Feast of the Assumption and for the office in the week following the Feast of the Nativity of Mary.<sup>49</sup> The second verse of the hymn describes Mary as the intermediary through whom the grace of heaven can be poured out on us: 'Just as rain on a fleece, so the grace of heaven descends on you so that it is returned to us, the children of adoption.'<sup>50</sup> *Te sanctam* shares a melody with three other hymn texts in the Barking Hymnal (*Beata nobis gaudia*, *Votiva cunctis* and *Agnetis festum martiris*). It is possible, although there is no specific evidence, that *Te sanctam* was the original Terce hymn that was relegated to a seasonal hymn after the addition of *Matrem per integerrimam*.

The hymn for Sext, *O res digna miraculo*, expounds the miracle of the virgin becoming a mother and the importance of Mary in freeing humanity from the bondage of death. The middle of the three verses stresses Mary's chastity and modesty:

Virgo mater efficitur  
 Set castitatis titulum  
 Materna servant ubera  
 Cum pudore virgineo.<sup>51</sup>

The final, doxological stanza addresses the Trinity and then ends 'who, through the virgin Mary, freed [us] from the bond of death' ('que per mariam virginem mortis solvit cyrographum').

The final hymn in this series is *Vergente solis radio*, which references the time of day and focuses on the praise of Mary and its efficacy for the petitioner:

May the liveliness of mind not become lukewarm from the inclining ray of the sun, but rather may it be aroused in praises of the Lord's mother. Let us celebrate her with devotion and petitionary prayers so that she might see to it that we rejoice with her in heaven.<sup>52</sup>

This set of four hymns, sung weekly at Barking during the commemorative office as well as on Marian feast days, frames the offices and creates a more specific identity for each of the lesser offices. The hymns also resonate with themes found in Matins: Mary as freeing humanity from original sin, Mary as intercessor Mary as a chaste mother.

The four antiphons used at the weekly office continue this approach by referring specifically to the time of day when the nuns celebrate the office.<sup>53</sup> This set of

<sup>49</sup> The only place, other than Barking sources, in which I have located this text is in a fifteenth/sixteenth-century volume. See Guido Maria Dreves, *Hymni Inediti Liturgische Hymnen des Mittelalters*, *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi* 23 (Leipzig, 1896), 57, no. 83.

<sup>50</sup> This verse resonates with Psalm 72:6: 'descendit sicut pluvia in vellus et sicut stillicidia stillantia super terram.'

<sup>51</sup> Dd.12.56, fol. 62v (also, Cambridge, Trinity College 1226, fol. 34v): 'The virgin becomes a mother, but the maternal breasts guard the reputation of chastity with maidenly modesty.'

<sup>52</sup> Dd.12.56, fol. 68v (also, Cambridge, Trinity College 1226, fol. 35r): 'Vergente solis radio mentis vigor non tepeat set genitricis domini in laudi bus efferveat. Hanc frequentemus studiis et precum oraminibus ut nos secum optineat gaudere in celestibus.'

<sup>53</sup> Unlike the hymns sung for almost all the Marian feasts, this set of antiphons is referenced in only one other place in the ordinal. They are specifically designated for the Feast of the Oblation when it is

antiphons, to my knowledge, appears in only one other manuscript: an eleventh-century addition in BnF lat. 2136 with alphabetic notation.<sup>54</sup> In the Barking Book of Hours, they appear as the antiphon for the psalms in each hour with a rubric indicating that they are for Saturday, that is, that they are to be sung with the commemorative office rather than the daily office.

These texts also bring to the fore the use of the word ‘sabbatum’. Clearly this use ties the antiphons to Saturday – the day on which the nuns sing them – rather than Sunday, the Christian sabbath. And yet, in several instances there is a connection with the concept of rest typically associated with Sunday. Earlier, in the responsory following the seventh lesson, the verb *sabbatizat* is used, which carries the connotation of keeping the sabbath rest. What, then, can these antiphons tell us about how the nuns thought of Saturday.

Each antiphon specifically names the liturgical hour at which it is used and references Saturday. Prime is hailed as the time of first offerings and dedication of the day, with the emphasis here on the holiness of Saturday (the sabbath), the light and the offering of praise:

Ave prima sole iusticie illuminata  
 Tibi laudis primitias  
 Offerimus ad primam  
 Sancti tui sabbati horam.<sup>55</sup>

The antiphon for Terce is much more specifically focused. It hails the bride of the Trinity and references the hour of Terce, the same hour that the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles:

Ave sponsa dei trinitatis  
 adornans thalamum virginitatis  
 ympnus hore tercię  
 sub trinitatis ordine ad sabati festum  
 invitans<sup>56</sup> familiarem  
 olim Ierosolimis hac hora missum apostolis.<sup>57</sup>

celebrated on Saturday, see Tolhurst, *Ordinale*, 340. Barking seems to have adopted the commemorative Office of the Virgin as the basis for its celebration of the Feast of the Oblation.

<sup>54</sup> The manuscript is available at <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc600283>. The antiphons in question appear on fol. 1r. The first antiphon, *Ave prima*, is accompanied by letter notation while the other three have digraphic notation. On this, see Alma Colk Browne, ‘The a-p System of Letter Notation’, *Musica Disciplina*, 35 (1981), 5–54. The manuscript is from the Abbey of Saint-Wandrille in Rouen. See also Alma Colk Santosuosso, *Letter Notations in the Middle Ages* (Ottawa, Canada, 1989). Santosuosso identifies these works as *unica* and points out that the latter three move in ascending modal order.

<sup>55</sup> Dd.12.56, fols. 53v and fol. 144r. The last word is rendered ‘haram’ rather than ‘horam’ on fol. 53v. ‘Illuminata’ appears as ‘illum nata’ on fol. 144r. ‘Hail Prime, illuminated by the light of justice, to you we offer our first offerings of praise at the first hour of your holy Saturday (sabbath)’.

<sup>56</sup> Both places in Dd.12.56 have *invitans* whereas BnF lat. 2136 has *invitat*.

<sup>57</sup> Dd.12.56, fols. 60v and 144r–v. ‘Hail bride of the Trinitarian God, adorning the marriage with virginity. Let this hymn of the hour of Terce under the order of the Trinity invite to the Saturday (sabbath) feast the intimate advocate that this hour was sent to the apostles once in Jerusalem.’



Although there is no biblical precedent for Mary's presence at the hour of Pentecost, numerous medieval depictions of the event show her present there, a parallel with her experience of the Holy Spirit at the annunciation.<sup>58</sup> This antiphon for Terce, through its language and through its presence in the Hours of the Virgin, makes that same connection.

The antiphon for Sext depicts Jesus wandering alone among the lilies of the valley:

Ave dignissima sabbati vacancia  
 Que sponsi fide fervencior  
 in centro solis queris  
 quem diligis in meridie  
 et spreto grege sodalium  
 invenis solivagum  
 inter lilia convallium.<sup>59</sup>

Again, the day and the time of day are central to the message of the antiphon. Here the power of the sun at midday is contrasted with the fervency of faith. The hour of Sext is connected to the hour of Jesus's crucifixion, his hour of greatest loneliness.

The final antiphon in this remarkable and unusual set references the ending of the day, where the bright star (Mary) is edging towards nightfall, and it reflects too the very act of praise in which the nuns are participating:

Ave clara dei stella  
 vergere ad occasum nescia  
 te singule hore sabbati salutant<sup>60</sup>  
 laude speciali  
 donec post nonam stilus orologii  
 inclinet umbra diei.<sup>61</sup>

This set of four antiphons orients the psalmody of the lesser hours towards both the specific day and the specific hour. Saturday was set apart liturgically for the praise of Mary and in that sense is a 'sabbath' or 'rest' from the regular liturgy. Crucially, the antiphons are also linked through their use of 'Ave' as an initial word. The very use of this word ties the antiphons into a wider practice of Marian devotion, including the concept of Mary as the new Eve. Together the hymnody and these antiphons serve to make the commemorative (weekly) office distinctly different from the daily office, even though the psalms, chapter and prayers remain common to both.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, [www.themorgan.org/collection/hours-of-henry-viii/108](http://www.themorgan.org/collection/hours-of-henry-viii/108) and <https://digitalprojects.brynmawr.edu/intimate-devotion/otherhours.html> (accessed 27 June 2021).

<sup>59</sup> Dd.12.56, fols. 67v and 144v. 'Hail most worthy Saturday (sabbath) rest that is more fervent in the faith of the bridegroom than in the center of the sun, you seek the one you love at noon, and you find him, having rejected the flock of companions, wandering alone among the lilies of the valley.'

<sup>60</sup> *Salutat*, and also *laudat*, on fol. 72r.

<sup>61</sup> Dd.12.56, fols. 72r and 144v. 'Hail bright star of God, unknowing you slip towards the setting [of the sun]. Let each of the hours of Saturday (the sabbath) greet you with special praises until, after none, the clock hand lowers with the shadow of the day.'

### Conclusions

This examination of the veneration of Mary at Barking Abbey through the weekly commemorative office offers several fruitful perspectives. While the usefulness of books of hours for liturgical study has long been appreciated, these volumes still remain understudied as resources for liturgical historians.<sup>62</sup> The common belief that the hours (*horae*) depict a personal devotional life often obscures their central role in monastic and clerical circles, where the Hours of the Virgin functioned as both communal worship and individual meditation. The small size of Dd.12.56 makes it inherently useful in multiple situations. What a perfect volume to put into the hands of a novice as she memorised and absorbed the material it contained: the weekly and daily Hours of the Virgin, the Office of the Dead, the litanies and the texts appropriate for Ethelburg, Hildelith and Wulfhild. These essential components of the nun's daily and weekly routine needed to be pondered in her heart and received in her spirit. From Dd.12.56 she would have gained a deep understanding of Marian theology as transmitted through these texts.

The texts of the Hours of the Virgin, although preserved only in a fifteenth-century manuscript, likely took shape in the twelfth century when the twelve-lesson format developed and flourished in Benedictine houses. Several factors support this proposition: the overall twelve-lesson format; the incorporation of the four antiphons that are otherwise only found in an eleventh-century source; and the close correspondence in the daily office between the twelfth-century Wherwell psalter and Dd.12.56. It is likely that Dd.12.56 reflects changes and accretions over the centuries, but these offices became a fixed part of monastic life in the 1100s and it seems probable that it was at that time that this extensive and cohesive vehicle of praise for the Virgin Mary was created at Barking Abbey in honour of their patron saint.

In the construction of their commemorative office, the nuns included several references to the sabbath, an important indication of its place in the liturgy. As Roper points out, the commemorative office was considered a festal liturgy that replaced the daily (non-Marian) office.<sup>63</sup> The incorporation of sabbath references within the office – notable especially in the opening antiphon of Matins, the seventh responsory and the antiphons for the lesser hours – therefore make explicit the ways in which the nuns focused on Mary on this day of rest. This liturgy specifically hallowed that day and distinguished it from the regular *opus dei*. This sabbath emphasis in the office additionally sets it apart from the liturgies for the major Marian feast days at the abbey.

Dd.12.56 also offers an important opportunity to see how the veneration of Mary at Barking differed from that offered to Ethelburg. As noted earlier, there are many attributes of Mary that are enumerated in the liturgy: Mary as the vessel/mother of God, the new Eve who cancels the sins of humanity, the model of modesty, the place of

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, Bonifacio Giacomo Baroffio, 'Testo e musica nei libri d'ore', *Rivista italiana di musicologia*, 46 (2011), 19–72. Baroffio argues specifically that Italian books of hours contribute to the knowledge of musical repertoires.

<sup>63</sup> Roper, *Benedictine Liturgy*, 91–2. In several instances the Barking Ordinal makes clear that the commemorative office is moved earlier in the week if a major feast day falls on Saturday. See, for example, the instructions for the Feast of Sts John and Paul (24 June). Tolhurst, *Ordinale*, 245.

rejoicing, the one who grants indulgences and above all as the chaste and yet maternal body. The veneration of Ethelburg at Barking, which draws heavily on her *vita* and the foundational stories of the abbey, focuses more on her role as the particular mother of these nuns, nursing them and being present to them with a mother's love. Mary is the mother of God, but Ethelburg is the nun's mother, their first abbess. Mary is Christ's mother; Ethelburg, like the nuns themselves, Christ's bride.<sup>64</sup> Because of the Barking nun's special connection to Ethelburg, they also call frequently upon her intercessory powers. The combination of the universal power of Mary and the localised power of Ethelburg protected and enveloped the nuns of Barking.

The presence of the full commemorative Office of the Virgin in Dd.12.56 significantly enhances understandings of the unique liturgy at Barking Abbey. While many aspects of Benedictine liturgy were fixed, there were also considerable opportunities for each religious house to make its own choices. This rare twelve-lesson office demonstrates how the Barking nuns focused their liturgy in honour of Mary in self-referential ways that reminded them weekly of their roles as handmaidens, brides and participants in the praise of the Virgin. With unique responsories, hymns and antiphons they sang their devotion to Mary, with a particular focus on the time of day for each of the lesser hours. The expansive imagery of the commemorative office and the brief, yet effective, focus on the purpose of praising Mary in the daily office permeated the nuns' worship.

#### Appendix I: Lessons and responsory chants for Matins in the commemorative office of Cambridge, University Library, Dd.12.56<sup>65</sup>

##### Lesson 1

Sacrosanctam venerabilis dei genitricis marie memoriam congrue divinis laudibus catholica frequentat ecclesia. quia eius sine intermissione salutari indiget auxilio; hec est virgo que antiquum diabolice dedicacionis cyrographum abolevit. totique seculo subvenit. et celeste regnum patefecit. dum per spiritum sanctum dei filium concepit. [fol. 12v]<sup>66</sup>

[R1] R. Ave maria gratia plena. dominus tecum. V. Natus de te et manens in te in eternum. [R.] Dominus tecum.

<sup>64</sup> For a detailed discussion of the texts for Ethelburg and for the texts themselves, see Yardley, 'Chants for the Holy Trinity'.

<sup>65</sup> I follow the capitalisation in the manuscript source, expand abbreviations and include punctuation where it exists in the manuscript. The punctuation marks used are a punctus with a tail (a full stop in transcription) and a vertical stroke with dots on either side (a semicolon), which I take to be a version of the punctus elevatus (see [Figure 1](#)). For the punctus, see especially line 8 after *ecclesia* and for the punctus elevatus, line 10 after 'auxilio'.

<sup>66</sup> The first three lessons are excerpted from a set of three that appeared together as early as the Worcester Portiforium in the eleventh century (Roper, *Benedictine Liturgy*, 243).

**Lesson 2**

Hec est sola cui nulla virgo potest comparari quia tanta est ut quanta sit non possit enarrari; hanc sancti expectabant patriarche; hanc preconabantur prophete omnesque quos spiritus sanctus attigerat optabant videre. [fol. 13r]

[R2] R. Beata et benedicta super omnes creaturas. Mater domini creatoris. V. Benedicant te omnia opera domini. [R.] Mater.

**Lesson 3**

Hec est domina regum decus mulierum gemma virginum lux seculorum congratulatio angelorum gratulatio archangelorum consolatio miserorum remissio peccatorum omniumque reparatio credencium. Quicquid igitur boni mundus habet. ab illa possidet. ex qua salutis inicium manat. [fol. 13v]

[R3] R. O maria sole splendidior celo sublimior. virtutibus celorum precellencior. V. Omnium deo coniuncior. [R.] Virtu.

**Lesson 4**

O alma virgo maria tanto cunctis angelorum spiritibus omnibusque electorum animabus in conspectu filii tui domini nostri gloriosor quanto ab ipso fieri beacior. Obsecramus ergo lacrimosis suspiriis. ut nunc ad gemitum nostri meroris aurem inclines magnifice pietatis. Surge ergo nostra domina beatissima virgo maria misericorditer actura pro nobis. Surge et amplectere misericordiam redemptoris. Da preces pro nobis; quos cernis offensos ante oculos conditoris. Ceacos<sup>67</sup> cordium oculos terge atque semitas iusticie nobis ostende. [fol. 14r–v]<sup>68</sup>

[R4] R. O singularis rerum augusta tu summa et finis operum dei. Qua nil pulcheris nec gloriosius mater pulcherimi factum credimus. V. In te omni decore perfecta requievit deus ab operibus. [R.] Qua nil. Gloria Patri.

[R5] In tempore paschali: [R.] Sancta maria.

**Lesson 5**

O sacratissima virgo maria nos qui hoc credimus quod virgo et mater dei sis. credendo senciamus quod pro nobis depreceris; et juxta petencium vota impetrata assequaris. Et qui confitemur te peperisse deum et hominem. Gaudeamus per te nobis advenisse pacis salutem. [fols. 20v–21r]

<sup>67</sup> Dd.12.56 has, apparently mistakenly, 'ceanos'.

<sup>68</sup> The lessons from which Lesson 4 is extracted can be found in J.N. Dalton, *Ordinale Exon. (Exeter Chapter MS. 3502 Collated with Parker MS. 93)*, Henry Bradshaw Society (London, 1909, 1909, 1926), 512. There they are credited as 'de sermone Maximi'. I have not located this sermon elsewhere. Lesson 5 comes from the third lesson in this set. Versions of these same lessons are found in the St Albans Breviary as well as the Winchcombe Breviary, both twelfth-century Benedictine manuscripts (Roper, *Benedictine Liturgy*, 243, 245).

[R6] R. Hec est ancilla domini que genuit dominum celi in forma servi. V. Deus in forma dei de virgine factus est homo. [R.] In for[ma]

[Christmas through Purification]

[R7] R. Sancta et immaculata virginitas quibus te laudibus referam nescio. Quia quem celi capere non poterant tuo gremio contulisti. V. Virginitus beatorum cunctis benedicta in evum ex omni rationabili dicaris virgo. [R.] Quia quem.<sup>69</sup>

### Lesson 6

Nosci domina beatissima virgo maria nostre defectum infirmitatis nosci quam sit lubricus status nostre miserie fragilitatis. Ergo si in tuis laudibus non invenimur idonei; sit veniale saltem quod in tua memoria frequentat devota presumpcio. Sicut enim prime matris offensam per quam incurrimus hereditarie mortis iacturam. per te dei genitrix virgo maria credimus fuisse solutam. sic nostrorum quoque contagia scelerum pro quibus ultricis flamine timemus incendium mater letemur annullata.<sup>70</sup> [fols. 21v–22r]

[R8] R. Sancta maria regina celorum domina angelorum imperatrix regum. Audi vota supplicum. V. Spes laysorum consolacio miserorum. [R.] Audi.

[R9] R. Beati et venerabilis virgo que sine tactu pudoris inventa es mater salvatoris. Iacebat in precipio et fulgebat in celo.<sup>71</sup> V. Ave maria gratia plena dominus tecum. [R.] Iace.

### Lesson 7

Sancta maria virgo semper piissima dei genitrix. castus christi thalama forma pudoris. ianua paradisi. regina celi. templum spiritus sancti. Ultra quam fari lingua possit carnea. vel corde quisque seu mente concipere. omnium digna preconio iubilum omne tua sancta vincis gratia. Sola sacratissima maria sine exemplo placens femina christo que mater effulges et virgo. te petimus per eundem dominum quem tuis sanctis portasti visceribus atque sacratis iactasti uberibus qui escam donat carni omnis generis apud christum quem cum patre et spiritui sancto continuis et adoramus impetres nobis plenam indulgenciam preteritorum criminum presencium seu futuorum omnium.<sup>72</sup> [fols. 22v–23r]

<sup>69</sup> CANTUS 007569 and 007569zd.

<sup>70</sup> This lesson and Lesson 7 appear to be part of the nine lessons in the liturgy at Sitten/Sion in Valais, Switzerland, appearing as lessons four, five and six in the fourteenth-century manuscript Sitten, Kapitelsarchiv MS. 11. See Josef Leisibach, *Die liturgischen Handschriften des Kapitelsarchivs in Sitten, Iter Helveticum* (Fribourg, 1979), 103. The first part of the lesson also appears in the *Breviarium Nidrosiense*, ed. Ingrid Sperber (Oslo, 2019), 817, available at [www.bokselskap.no/boker/breviarium](http://www.bokselskap.no/boker/breviarium) (accessed 13 March 2021). There is no clear relationship between these sources and the Barking use of the passages.

<sup>71</sup> CANTUS 006167.

<sup>72</sup> The first half of this lesson is found in a prayer from an eleventh-century French manuscript. Henri Barré postulates that the prayer dates from before that time and has some Anglo-Saxon influence, see Henri Barré, *Prières anciennes de l'occident à la mère du sauveur: Des origines à saint Anselme* (Paris, 1963), 200.

[R10] R. Beata dei genitricis requiem merito sabbatizat sponsa ecclesia. Eius filio est desponsata. V. Eius laudes frequentat per ipsam adoptatam. [R.] Eius.

[R11] R. Beata viscera marie virginis que portaverunt eterni patris filium. et beata ubera que te lactaverunt christum dominum. Quia humilis pro salute mundi de virgine nasci dignatus est. V. Ave maria gratia plena dominus tecum. [R.] Quia.<sup>73</sup>

### Lesson 8

Beata dei genitrix virgo maria intemerate virginitatis sanctitas angeliceque puritatis integritas. iam nunc suscipe vota peccantium. et admitte intra divine exaudicionis sacrarium. Ad te domina faciem mentis. ad te oculos cordis et capitis convertimus ut aucta [evicta]<sup>74</sup> precaminum nostrorum suspiriis. deum exorare non desinas pro servulorum excessibus. Succurre alma genitrix christi miseris ad te confugientibus. auxiliare in te confidentibus senciant omnis tuum levamen quicumque devote frequentaverint tue gloriose laudis memoriam.<sup>75</sup> [fols. 23v–24r]

[R12] R. Congratulamini mihi omnis qui diligitis dominum. Quia de meis visceribus genui deum et hominem. V. Memoria mea in generatione seculorum. [R.] Quia. Gloria Patri. Quia.<sup>76</sup>

[R13] R. Te laudant angeli sancta dei genitrix que virum non cognovisti et dominum in tuo utero baiulasti concepisti per aurem dominum nostrum. Ut benedicta dicaris inter omnes mulieres. V. Ipsum genuisti et in precepto posuisti quem adorant multitudo angelorum. [R.] Ut. Gloria. Ut.<sup>77</sup>

[R14] R. Mater misericordie. [incipit only – for Eastertide]

### Lesson 9

Magne devocionis et fidei hec mulier ostenditur. que scribis et phariseis dominum tentantibus simul; et blasphemantibus tanta eius incarnationem pre omnibus sinceritate cognoscit. tanta fiducia confitetur ut et presencium procerum calumpniam et futurorum confundat hereticorum perfidiam.<sup>78</sup> [fol. 27r–v]

[R15] R. Intacta virginitate et illesa integritate. Clausa et integra omnipotentem enixa sum. V. Observatur os blasphemium. [R.] Clausa.

[R16] R. Confirmatum est cor virginis in quo divina misteria angelo narrante concepit te formam pro filiis hominum castis concepit visceribus. Et benedicta in eternum

<sup>73</sup> CANTUS 006171 and 006171a.

<sup>74</sup> *Breviarium Nidrosiense* has the better reading 'evicta'.

<sup>75</sup> I have located this text only in the Nidros Breviary, where it begins with the phrase *O sacratissima virgo Maria*, see *Breviarium Nidrosiense*, 818. There are several other additional differences in the text.

<sup>76</sup> This responsory seems to be a truncated version of CANTUS 006332. The full version appears later in matins as the second responsory after Lesson 11.

<sup>77</sup> CANTUS 007756 and 007756a.

<sup>78</sup> These four lessons come from a homily by the Venerable Bede on the scriptural passage in Luke. For Bede's Homily, see [www.monumenta.ch/latein/text.php?tabelle=Beda\\_Venerabilis&rumpfid=Beda%20Venerabilis,%20Homiliae,%203,%20%20%2058&level=4&domain=&lang=0&cid=&hilitate\\_id=&links=&inframe=1](http://www.monumenta.ch/latein/text.php?tabelle=Beda_Venerabilis&rumpfid=Beda%20Venerabilis,%20Homiliae,%203,%20%20%2058&level=4&domain=&lang=0&cid=&hilitate_id=&links=&inframe=1) (accessed 16 March 2021).

deum nobis protulit et hominem. V. Domus pudici pectoris templum repente fit dei intacta nesciens virum verbo concepit filium. [R.] Et benedicta.<sup>79</sup>

### Lesson 10

Et nos igitur extollamus vocem cum ecclesia catholica cuius hec mulier typum gessit. extollamus et mentem de medio turbarum dicamusque salvatori. Beatus venter qui te portavit. et ubera que suxisti. [fol. 28r–v]

[R17] R. Virgo incomperabilis non est dolor sicut dolor tuus in filii passione. Non est gaudium ut gaudium tuum in filii resurrectione. V. Merito conregnas que compassa es. [R.] Non est.

[R18] R. Continet in gremio celum terraque regentem virgo dei genitrix proceres comitantur ierlum [heriles]. Per quos orbis ovans christo sub principe pollet. V. Natus in orbe verus non sublimus deus fulget in axe. [R.] Per.<sup>80</sup>

### Lesson 11

Vere beata parens; que sicut quidam ait; enixa est puerpera regem. qui celum terramque regit per secula cuius numen et eterno complectens omnia giro imperio<sup>81</sup> sine fine manet. Que ventre beato gaudio<sup>82</sup> matris habens cum virginitatis honore nec primam similem visa est nec habere sequentem. At ille dixit. Quinimo beati qui audiunt verbum dei et custodiunt illud. [fols. 28v–29r]

[R19] R. Ego fructificavi in dei filio suavitatem odoris. Ego mater pulcre dilectionis. V. Spiritus meus super mel dulcis. [R.] Ego.

[R20] R. Congratulamini mihi omnis qui diligitis dominum quia cum essem parvula placui altissimo. Et de meis visceribus genui deum hominem. V. Beatam me dicent omnes generationes quia ancillam humilem respexit deus. [R.] Et de.<sup>83</sup>

### Lesson 12

Pulcre salvator attestationi mulieris annuit non eam tantummodo que corporaliter verbum dei generare meruerat. Sed et omnes qui verbum dei spiritualiter auditu fidei concipere et boni operis custodia vel in suo vel in proximorum corde parere et quasi alere studuerint asseverans esse beatos. Et quia eadem dei genitrix et inde quidem beata quia verbi incarnandi ministra facta est temporalis sed inde multum beacior quia eiusdem semper amandi custos manebat eterna. qua sententia sapientes iudeorum clam perturit [percutit]<sup>84</sup> qui verbum dei non audire et custodire. sed negare et blasphemare querebant. [fols. 29v–30r]

<sup>79</sup> CANTUS 006314 and 006314a.

<sup>80</sup> CANTUS 006333 and 006333zb. The CANTUS text gives *heriles*.

<sup>81</sup> Should probably read 'imperium'.

<sup>82</sup> Should read 'gaudia'.

<sup>83</sup> CANTUS 006322 and 001574.

<sup>84</sup> This looks like 'perturit' ('parturit') in the manuscript. The text of Bede's sermon has 'percutit'.

[R21] R. Sancta maria succurre miseris iuva pusillanimes refove flebiles. ora pro populo interveni pro clero intercede pro devoto femineo sexu. Senciant omnes tuum levamen quicumque celebrant tuam memoriam.<sup>85</sup> V. Ave maria gratia plena dominus tecum. [R.] Senciant. Gloria Patri. [R.] Senciant.

[R22] R. Nesciens mater virgo virum peperit sine dolore salvatorem seculorum ipsum regem angelorum sola virgo lactabat ubera de celo plena. V. Beata viscera marie virginis que portaverunt eterni patris filium. [R.] So. Gloria. [R.] Sola.

[R23] R. Succurre nobis (Incipit only)

<sup>85</sup> CANTUS 004703.