

ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS

Perhaps a little grandiose, but I wonder if our chapel liturgy booklets have illuminated manuscripts as their remote ancestors, perhaps several times removed.

St Benedict puts the chapel services, the 'Work of God' in the central position in Benedictine life. Monks of former times seem to have learnt everything by heart, but we have booklets and leaflets and A5 sheets to keep us together in our praise of God, and to enable those who are with us in the chapel to join in.

One of our sisters said that tracing the development of the community's liturgy was the equivalent of tracing the development of the duplicating equipment that was available—if you want to put a new idea into practice, everyone has to know what they are supposed to be doing or singing.

When we moved to Turvey we re-organised the structure of our liturgy. Someone had given us a large quantity of self-copying paper, some blue, some pink. Sr Paschal used it to type out the structure sheets for the liturgy. Caution was needed with it, if you left the sheets in the sunlight they went black.

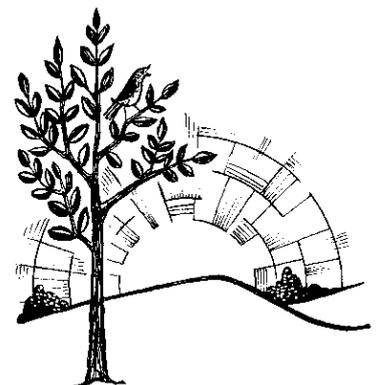
In 1992, Windows 3.1 arrived at the Abbey, and we began to turn out booklets for the liturgy, which brings me back to my title. We have quite a large collection of black and white clipart, most, but not all, drawn by Sr Regina, and I like to use it in the booklets, and to try to use pictures relevant to the contents of the booklets. I remember finding a very nice picture of a bird singing in a tree with the sun rising behind it, and I used it for Lauds (morning prayer). Sr Regina was far from pleased and informed me that it was a nightingale. I wondered if an 'up' or a 'down' arrow was needed on the sun. The picture is still in use in the Lauds booklets.

Some seasons are easier to illustrate than others. Advent connects with light beginning to appear in the darkness, Christmas is no problem with cribs and stars and everything else, Lent connects with the Cross. Easter is the hardest, how do you depict resurrection, something outside our everyday experience? Someone observed that we have a large congregation at the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday because suffering and death are something people are familiar with, but resurrection? The disciples didn't recognise the risen Jesus when they met him, something was the same but very different, something was totally new and outside their experience.

Paintings of the resurrection often make Jesus look like the original washing powder advert, whiter than white.

Sr Regina drew the women approaching the tomb to anoint the body, and added a few daffodils, well, why not.

Perhaps in some way the daffodils connect our lives now with the risen Jesus. The women were in for a big surprise, I think that we will be as well when we finally recognise Jesus standing among us.



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