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Officium Beatae Mariae Virginis Manuscript Donated

Boston College Law School

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3/22/05--Daniel R. Coquillette, J. Donald Monan, S.J. University Professor at the Law School, has recently donated a beautiful illuminated manuscript to the Boston College Law Library. This manuscript is an Officium Beatae Mariae Virginis – a Book of Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

"We're so pleased and honored to receive this latest manuscript from Dan," said Associate Dean for Library and Computing Services Filippa Marullo Anzalone. "His generous donations have established our rare book collection as one of the most unique and respected in New England."

Dating from Italy in the late 1300s or early 1400s, the manuscript consists of approximately 80 vellum leaves. Written in black and red, the manuscript features 11 large and intricately illuminated initials, besides many other small illuminated or painted initials. Many pages feature floral borders colored in orange, blue, green, and red and illuminated with gold. The inside cover of the manuscript is signed "Ex Dono Comiti...Grimaldi de Bellino...1788," and could have belonged to the famous Grimaldi family of Monaco.

"This Book of Hours is a beautiful symbol of the Law School’s Catholic-Jesuit identity," says Professor Coquillette. "It also provides an example of the art of the book, and demonstrates a stage before the early printed books from the late 1400s."

The manuscript is part of a series of annual gifts of books and manuscripts that Professor Coquillette has given to the Law Library in recent years. Previous gifts from Professor Coquillette include a 1476 Summa by St. Thomas Aquinas and a 1496 Decretals of Gregory IX. Both of these works are from the earliest days of printing and retain many features in common with handwritten manuscripts like the Book of Hours.

"Thanks to Dan Coquillette, we now have examples of works that tell us the story of the history of printing, from the days of handwritten manuscripts through the earliest days of printing and up through the eighteenth century," says Karen Beck, the Law Library’s Curator of Rare Books.

The manuscript will be on exhibit in the Law Library’s Daniel R. Coquillette Rare Book Room the week of May 16-20, 2005, and again for a longer period in January 2006. The Rare Book Room is generally open Monday – Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.