

**Dictionary**  
**of the New Latin Psalter**  
**of Pope Pius XII**

*by*

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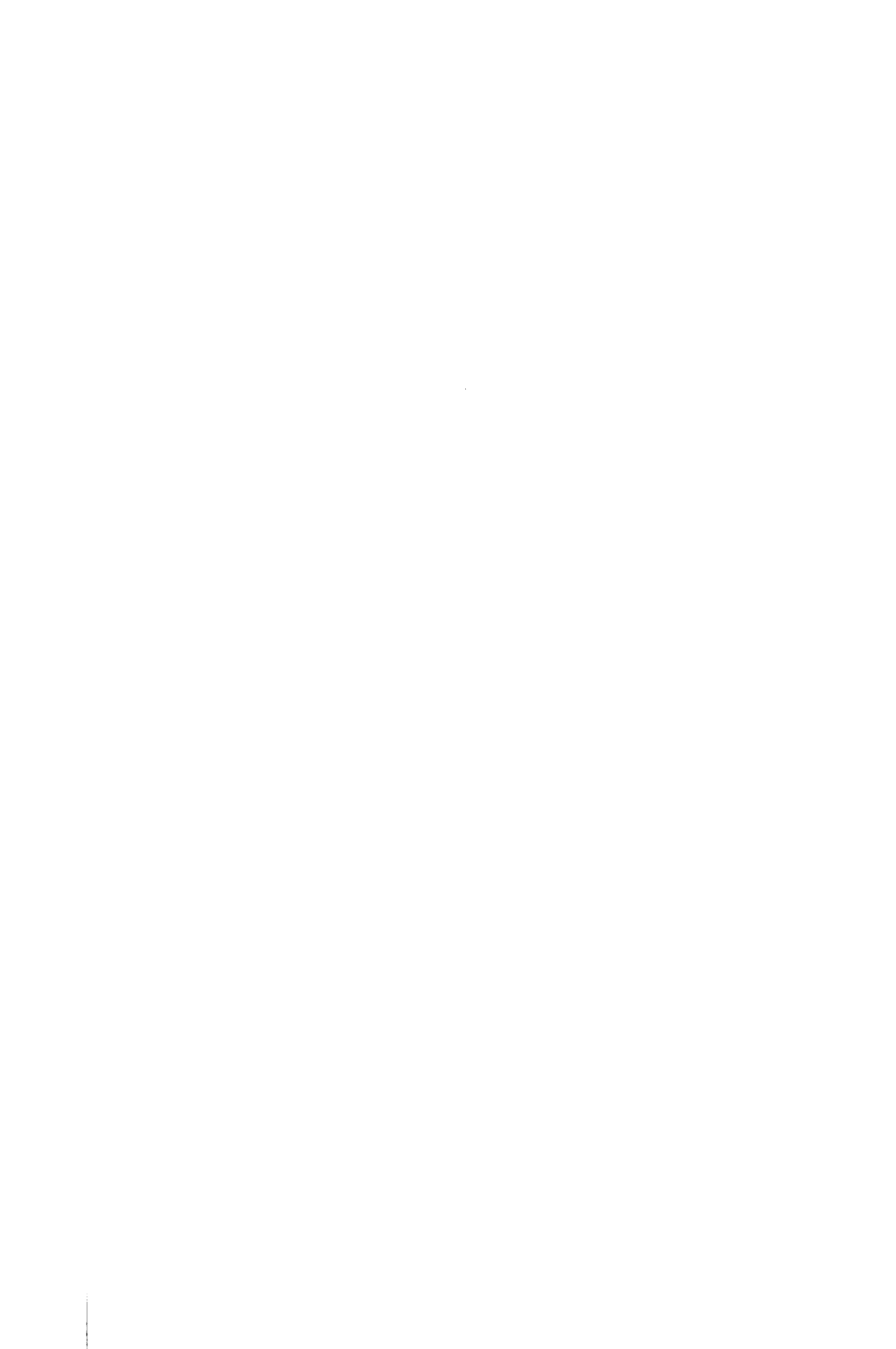
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MARIAE  
GENITRICI ATQUE VIRGINI

*hoc opusculum  
aerumnarum plenum  
in negotiis variis  
indignus scriptor*



# Preface

The Psalter forms the cornerstone of the *Breviarium Romanum* or “Office” which priests of the Roman Rite are bound to recite in part each day. Ordinarily, all of the 150 psalms are said in the course of each week’s Office. It is evident, then, that a priest’s appreciation of his Office is dependent, to a great extent, on his appreciation of the Psalms. And because the Breviary is in Latin, this appreciation is further dependent on the priest’s knowledge of the Latin vocabulary of the Psalter.

Saint Jerome made three Latinizations of the Psalter. The first was a correction of the existing Latin translation; the second was a translation from the Greek; and the third was a fresh translation from the original Hebrew. The second became part of the Vulgate and was later incorporated into the Breviary. This is the “Old Psalter” that has become so familiar to generations of priests.

Then in 1945, Pope Pius XII issued the Apostolic Letter *In Cotidianis Precibus*, establishing a new translation from the original Hebrew as the official Latin version of the Psalms for the Breviary.

“It should be remembered,” wrote Pope Pius XII, “that the Latin Church possesses these Psalms as a heritage from a Church whose language was Greek. Originally translated almost word for word from Greek into Latin, they were in course of time given a number of careful corrections and revisions, most notably by the ‘Greatest Doctor’ in Sacred Scriptures, St. Jerome. But these corrections did not remove many of the obvious inaccuracies occurring already in the Greek version, inaccuracies which leave the force and meaning of the original Hebrew text quite obscure. As a result the generality of Latin readers still could not grasp with ease the sense of the sacred Psalms.”

It is with this New Psalter of Pius XII that the present work concerns itself. The vocabulary of the N.P. is “classical Latin,” that is, as found in the golden age of Cicero. Yet it does not mean that all words of the N.P. can be found in works commonly read by the seminarian as he prepares for college.

In order that young priests and seminarians might have an efficient tool at hand to help their appreciation and understanding of the N.P.—and to facilitate the readjustment of the “Old Psalter priests”—it was thought expedient to compile this vocabulary.

But what began as a very complete, perhaps

grandiose, plan soon had to be limited by practical considerations. Very early in the composition of this work limits had to be set on its scope. Because the grammar and vocabulary of the N.P. are so simple, there appears little reason to explain each phrase and construction in detail or to give a complete definition of names of biblical places and persons. Undoubtedly, any cleric reading his Office will have enough exegetical lore to know that Moses and Aaron were brothers, and that Abiram and Dathan were swallowed up by the earth.

The problem of citations and reference is thorny. Should every occurrence of *cogito* be given? Usually the first citation is given. If there are more meanings to a word, more citations are given. Thus, *munus*, *eris* becomes gift, bribe 14:5; office 108:8. Often the basic or radical meaning of a word is given first. If this is insufficient to explain the sense of a word in a particular verse, a second meaning is given. Transliterations were avoided as much as possible, viz., *fidelitas*—fidelity. All but three words could be found in Harpers' Latin Dictionary: *flavor*, *myrias*, and *hyrax*. Of these, *flavor* and *myrias* I located in DuCange; *hyrax* is the generic name of some Palestinian rodent. In order to avoid repetitions, substantives were omitted, as *profundum*, *altum*, *medium*, etc. Instead, the adjectives whence these substantives

are derived have been given. Moreover, diacritical marks have been omitted to avoid excessive cost of publication.

Proper names have been cited in their Latin and Hebrew spellings in order to acquaint the user of this vocabulary with some of the differences in the King James (RSV) and Douay versions of the Bible. Hebrew spellings are found not infrequently in Catholic publications. Our literature seemingly knows only the King James spelling. Furthermore, if we are to make our publications palatable to non-Catholics, we must adapt our spelling to their usage. Witness the review of *The Book of God: Adventures from the Old Testament* (by April Oursler Armstrong) in *Concordia Theological Monthly* (Vol. XXIX, No. 4, page 312—April, 1958) by Walter R. Roehrs, where the reviewer writes: "To the Lutheran child the Roman Catholic spelling of some proper names may prove disconcerting."

The introductory verse of many Psalms was omitted in this work since it does not occur in the Roman Breviary. It is usually a cue for the choir master or establishes the authorship of the Psalm. For the most part it would only multiply proper names and add little to the understanding of the Psalms from a literary point of view.

Father Matthew Britt, O.S.B., compiled the standard work on the vocabulary of the Old Psal-

ter for English-speaking priests. No pretense is made to equal the dictionary of Father Britt. Yet such a comprehensive work was deemed unnecessary for the New Psalter. Perhaps, in the future the present work can be enlarged to include the hymns of the Breviary and Missal.

I take this opportunity to thank the Rev. John R. McCarthy for his many valuable suggestions and the Very Rev. Jan B. Kish, V.F., in helping me proofread the manuscript.

I can hardly refrain from quoting a sentence found in *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* by Beryl Smalley (Oxford, 1952). The quotation (page 356) is from Andrew of Saint Victor, who complains about disturbances (in that age!): “Ab otiosis et in tempore otii et non a discurrentibus et perturbationis tempore sapientia discitur.” In these times of ecclesiastical brick and mortar, more leisure is needed to study and appreciate the Psalter. A hurried and unintelligible reading of the Psalms can cause a distaste for the word of God.

W. J. K.

Saint Paul's Rectory  
Athens, Ohio  
April 23, 1958



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Psalter of Pope Pius XII**

# List of Abbreviations

abl.—ablative case	imp.—imperative
acc.—accusative case	m—masculine gender
adv.—adverb	n—neuter gender
c—common gender	pl.—plural
comp.—comparative	prep.—preposition
conj.—conjunction	sc.—scilicet
dat.—dative case	sg.—singular
dep.—deponent	superl.—superlative
f—feminine gender	usu.—usually
gen.—genitive case	w.—with

## CANTICLES

NAME	SOURCE	CODE
		LETTER
<i>Canticum Moysis</i>	Ex. 15:1–18	A
<i>Canticum Moysis</i>	Deut. 32:1–43	B
<i>Canticum Annae</i>	I Sam. 2:1–10	C
<i>Canticum David</i>	I Chron. 29:10–13	D
<i>Canticum Tobiae</i>	Tobit 13:2–9	E
<i>Canticum Judith</i>	Judith 16:13–17	F
<i>Canticum Ecclesiastici</i>	Sirach 36:1–16	G
<i>Canticum Isaiae</i>	Is. 12:1–6	H
<i>Canticum Ezechiae</i>	Is. 38:10–22	I
<i>Canticum Isaiae</i>	Is. 45:15–26	J
<i>Canticum Jeremiae</i>	Jer. 31:10–14	K
<i>Canticum Trium puerorum</i>	Dan. 3:52–88	L
<i>Canticum Habacuc</i>	Hab. 3:2–19	M
<i>Canticum B.M. Virginis</i>	Luke 1:46–55	N
<i>Canticum Zachariae</i>	Luke 1:68–79	O
<i>Canticum Simeonis</i>	Luke 2:29–32	P

# A

- a, ab—prep. w. abl.—of, by, from, away, 2:3; 7:2.
- Aaron—Aaron, brother of Moses; chosen by God to accompany Moses to Pharaoh; made golden calf for worship as Yahweh when Moses was on Mt. Sion receiving commandments; was made a priest. Numbers 3:3; Ps. 76:21.
- abditus, -a, -um—concealed, hidden, 16:12. From *abdo*.
- abduco, -duxi, -ductum (3)—lead or carry away, 136:3.
- abeo, -ii, -itum, -ire—go away, 21:2.
- aberro (1)—go astray, 13:3.
- abhorreo, -horruī (2)—shrink back from, 35:3.
- abies, -etis (f)—fir-tree, 103:17.
- abigo, -egi, -actum (3)—drive away, 124:5.
- Abiron—Abiram conspired with Korah (Core) against Moses and Aaron; was swallowed up by the earth with all who participated in the sedition. Numbers 16:1–35; Ps. 105:17.
- abjicio (abicio), -jeci, -jectum (3)—throw away, 26:9.
- abominabilis, -e—detestable, 87:9.
- abominatio, -onis (f)—detestation, B, 16.
- abomino (1 dep.)—hate, detest, abhor, 5:7.
- abortivus, -a, -um—prematurely born, untimely, 57:9.

Abraham—Abraham, father of Hebrew nation; divinely called to go to Canaan; was promised material and spiritual gifts; noted for deep faith in God. Genesis 22; Ps. 46:10.

abripio, -ripui, -reptum (3)—snatch away, drag off, 27:3.

abscindo, -scidi, -scissum (3)—tear or cut off, 30:23.

abscondo, -scondi, -sconditum (3)—hide, 9:16.

absorbeo, -sorbui, -sorptum (2)—swallow, gulp, 68:16.

abs—prep. w. abl.—without, 72:27.

absque—prep. w. abl.—without, B,4.

absum, afui, afuturum, abesse—be away, 118:150.

absumo, -sumpsi, -sumptum (3)—take away, lessen, destroy, consume, 48:15.

abundanter (adv.)—fully, 30:24.

abundantia, -ae (f)—plentifulness, 71:16.

abundo (1)—abound, team, w. abl., 4:8.

ac (conj.)—and, 1:2.

accedo, -cessi, -cessum (3)—approach, come to, w. *ad* & acc., 90:10.

accelero (1)—hasten, quicken, G,10.

accendo, -cendi, -censum (3)—kindle, set fire to, 77:21.

accenseo, -censum (2)—reckon in addition, add, 86:4.

accepto (1)—receive, 50:18.

accingo, -cixi, -cinctum (3)—gird, equip, 64:7.