

Mozart's Vesperae Solennes de Confessore: Identification of the Saint and Date

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(This article is formatted for posting on the World Wide Web.)

Summary

I consider it *probable* that September 24 was the day in 1780 for which Mozart composed his Vesperae Solennes de Confessore (K 339). In the liturgical calendar used in Salzburg, this was a feast of Saint Rupert. He was the co-titular (patron) of the cathedral with St Virgil, and the patron saint of the Salzburg region.

Alternatively, I consider it *possible* that September 28 was the date in question. This was a feast of St Virgil, co-titular (patron) of the Salzburg cathedral.

Because definitive proof is lacking, I here express conclusions in terms of *probabilities* and *possibilities*. The evidence on which these conclusions are based follows.

Introduction

Number 339 in Ludwig Köchel's catalog of the musical works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is given to a setting of five psalms plus the Magnificat for chorus, soloists and small orchestra. The psalms in question are: Dixit Dominus (Vulgate 109), Confitebor (110), Beatus vir (111), Lauda pueri (112), and Laudate Dominum (116).

Mozart himself wrote the words, "Salzburg 1780" at the head of the manuscript of this work; the title *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore*, however, was added by a later hand. ("Solennes" is a spelling variant of "Solemnes".) The manuscript of K 339 was lost or destroyed in World War II.

This type of composition was used in the Roman Catholic liturgy of vespers. Furthermore, it would have been intended for the celebration of vespers on a specific saint's day in the liturgical calendar, a saint identified only by the general designation, "confessor". The manuscript does not give the actual name of this saint or the date of the saint's feast day.

Karl Gustav Kellerer, "Zum Vorliegenden Band", pp vii-xiii in *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*. Serie I: Geistliche Gesangswerke. Werkgruppe 2: Litaneien, Vespere. Band 2: Vespere und Vesperpsalmen. Verlegt von Karl Gustav Fellerer und Felix Schroeder. Kassel: Bärenreiter 1959. [Hereafter Fellerer.]

Ludwig Ritter von Köchel, *Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Tonwerke Wolfgang Amade Mozarts*, 6th ed. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel 1964, 360-361

It is generally assumed that this composition was commissioned by Count Hieronymus von Colloredo, Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, and first "performed" (that is, used liturgically) in the cathedral of Salzburg. Mozart himself had returned to Salzburg in early 1779:

On January 17 he was employed as court organist with a handsome salary. This position demands his performance in the festive masses at Salzburg Cathedral. He is not obliged, however, to compose for the liturgy regularly. He composes his church music works mostly for special occasions.

<http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/Mozart408019.pdf>

We do not know when K 339 was commissioned, or how long Mozart took to create this work. We also do not know exactly what role Mozart had in rehearsing it, though he very likely played the organ.

The Question

The fact that the specific occasion for which the *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* was originally composed is not known came to my attention recently when the program notes accompanying a fine local performance of K 339 began by saying simply, “*Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* was written in 1780 for an unknown saint’s day” (Margaret C Matheson). Further research showed that this conclusion is commonly accepted.

Der Zusatz “de confessore” zeigt an, dass diese Vesper für die Feier eines Heiligen bestimmt ist, des also Bekenner (confessor) verehrt wird.

Ludwig Ritter von Köchel, *Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Tonwerke Wolfgang Amade Mozarts*, 6th ed. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel 1964, pp 360-361

While the *Vesperae de Dominica*, K 321, were intended for ordinary Sunday use, the *Vesperae solennes de confessore*, K 339, were written for a saint’s day. We do not know which saint is being celebrated as we have no information on the immediate circumstances surrounding the work’s composition.

Neal Zaslaw with William Cowdery, eds. *The Complete Mozart: A Guide to the Musical Works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*. New York: Mozart Bicentennial at Lincoln Center and W.W. Norton 1990, p 21

Since there is no information concerning the composition or the occasion for which the *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* (K 339) was written, the confessor-saint mentioned in the title is unknown.

Anonymous [Program Notes](#)
Monteverdi Choir & Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique, Wednesday,
January 14 2004

The precise occasion for the work is unknown, but the demand for such music is clear. The cathedral’s liturgical calendar included 21 major feasts that would have been preceded the night before by a solemn Vespers performed with orchestra, customarily with the archbishop himself presiding.

Neal Zaslaw. [Program Notes](#):
Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra 2006

I was surprised that the name of the confessor for whose feast day this composition had been created was not known, and was not at all satisfied with the phrase “for an unknown saint’s day”. Surely something a little more precise could be said! Intrigued and challenged by this “minor mozartian mystery”, I decided to see if I could at least narrow down the possibilities.

I have therefore asked, at the very least:

What saints' days are the most likely occasions for which K 339 was composed?

And if at all possible:

For what specific saint's day was it composed?

Here is the story of my research on this question. On the whole I am pleased to have been able to find out so much about the origins and use of the *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore*. More about the K 339 is given in the sources above and in the following references.

H. C. Robbins Landon, ed., *The Mozart Compendium*. New York: Schirmer 1990, p 316

K. G. Fellerer, "Mozarts Officiumskompositionen," in *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1954. Salzburg: Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum 1955

Mozart: *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore*.

<http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/EmmanuelMusicMozartVesperae.pdf>

Methodology and Resources

The most desirable approach to the questions just posed would have been to examine a missal or breviary or related liturgical book that was used in the Salzburg cathedral in 1780. As I did not have access to such a resource, I had to depend on indirect evidence, particularly the high degree of uniformity exhibited by the Roman Catholic liturgy during the period after the Reformation and Council of Trent and before 1970. Thus early and mid-twentieth century editions of the *Missale Romanum*, *Breviarium Romanum* and *Liber Usualis* could, when used with care, provide information about the liturgy in Mozart's day.

In addition, considerable information potentially was contained in the *title* of the work in question, Solemn Vespers of a Confessor. Exactly what "solemn vespers" and "confessor" mean here is of particular importance. Finally, appreciation of the liturgy of vespers and of the liturgical calendars of the Roman Catholic Church are necessary foundations for this study.

Resources

Missale Romanum (1936 ed). Turin: Mame 1938

Saint Andrew Daily Missal, by G. Lefevbre. Saint Paul MN: E. M. Lohmann 1940

Breviarium Romanum. 4 vol. Turin: Mame 1956

Roman Breviary in English. 4 vol. New York: Benziger Brothers 1950

The Monastic Diurnal or *The Days Hours of the Monastic Breviary*, 2 vol. Mechlin: Dessain 1960

The Liber Usualis, ed. Benedictines of Solesmes. New York: Desclee 1956

The Roman Martyrology (1922 ed), trans. R. Collins; intro. J. B. Collins. Westminster MD: Newman Bookshop 1946

Herbert Thurston and Donald Attwater, *Butler's Lives of the Saints* Complete Edition. 4 vol. Westminster MD: Christian Classics 1956

The following published dissertations have been particularly helpful:

Fumiko Niiyama,
Zum mittelalterlichen Musikleben im Benediktinerinnenstift Nonnberg zu Salzburg.
Dargestellt am Nonnberger Antiphonar Cod. 26 E 1B und am Tagebuch der Praxedis Halleckerin unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Zeit von Advent bis zur Octav von Epiphanie sowie des Officium von der Heiligen Erentrudis.
Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 1994
[hereafter: Niiyama]

Johann Hirnsperger,
Die Statuten des Salzburger Domkapitels (1514 bis 1806).
Eine rechtshistorische Untersuchung zur inneren Verfassung des weltgeistlichen adeligen Salzburger Domkapitels.
Graz: Austria Medien Service 1998
[hereafter Hirnsperger]

I am also grateful to Dr Walter Moser and Mrs Klara Moser for translating some difficult passages in German and other helpful advice.

Liturgical Calendars

The Roman Catholic Church uses three liturgical calendars simultaneously. First, the *Roman Martyrology* contains a complete list, day by day through the year, of all saints days and feasts of Our Lord and of Our Lady. The index of the 1922 edition includes roughly 4700 items. Entries for each day traditionally are read by monastics in a morning liturgy, but this liturgical book is otherwise not widely known or used.

Next, the *Roman liturgical calendar* lists feasts commemorated each day at Mass and the divine office throughout the entire or universal church. From the large number of feast days of the Martyrology, a much smaller number are chosen for daily liturgical use. In a 1940 edition of the Roman Missal, for example, there are some 20 feasts of Our Lord and 19 of Our Lady, while

378 saints are named on 270 individual days. In addition, the calendar includes the liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmastide, Lent and Eastertide.

Finally, each church, diocese, region and country also uses a *local liturgical calendar*. This includes small numbers of additional feast days that are celebrated locally but not by the universal church. There might be as few as three such feasts, but usually more.

In the Roman liturgical calendar, some saints are more important than others. In fact there is a gradation of importance and this is reflected in what was called “the rite and degree of feasts.” Here, however, I use the term “rank” as it is more common usage. The lowest of six ranks is called “simple” and the highest, “double of the first class with octave.”

Vespers

Vespers, together with the hours of matins, lauds, prime, terce, sext, none and compline, constitute the divine office (or opus Dei or liturgy of the hours). Vespers is nominally celebrated in the late afternoon or early evening (though in practice this time has varied).

Major components of this liturgy are five psalms plus the Magnificat (where Roman liturgical custom is followed, as for example in the Salzburg cathedral). Four psalms are used in the monastic liturgy (as for example in the Salzburg men’s monastery of St Peter and women’s monastery of St Erentrud or Nonnberg.)

The psalms are taken from the series 109-144 (Vulgate numbering). Further, distinct sets of five psalms are used for Sundays and for feasts of different designations. Such sets of psalms are listed in **Appendix I**.

The psalms and Magnificat are not all there is to the liturgy of vespers, however, and a typical order of service for this liturgy as a whole is given in **Appendix II**.

Psalms and Magnificat can be sung using Gregorian chant. They might also be sung according to another musical style such as that used by Mozart. In addition, a setting of a single psalm by Mozart, for example, might be used together with the singing of the others using Gregorian chant. Almost all of the liturgy is in fact chanted or sung, and this can be done in a simple manner or in a solemn form of chant.

Confessor

In the present context, “confessor” has nothing to do with the sacrament of confession, the confessing of sins or the hearing of confessions.

“Confessor” is a technical term, the origins of which go back to the period of Roman

persecution of Christians. Some Christians were killed; these were the martyrs (males) and virgin martyrs (females); “martyr” is also used as a generic inclusive term. Others confessed or professed their faith and were imprisoned and tortured but not killed; these were called confessors (males) and virgins (females).

In the course of time the categorization of saints expanded. “Confessor” now generally refers to male saints who are not categorized as apostles or evangelists or martyrs or abbots. The category of confessor is sometimes divided into those who are bishops and those who are not. The Roman liturgical calendar includes a large number of confessors. Thus ca 1940 there were 105 such saints. A few of these had been added to the calendar since Mozart’s day, he therefore might have been aware of ca 90 confessors.

This appreciation of the meaning of the term confessor, plus study of the Roman liturgical calendar, allows us to reduce the number of possible saint’s feasts for which Mozart might have composed K 339 from ca 270 days to ca 100. This is progress, but it would be desirable to lower this number even further.

Solemn I

The term “solemn” in the title of K 339 may be understood in three ways. Each will be examined to see what light it sheds, if any, on the question of the saint’s day for which Mozart’s composition was intended. (In the context of this study, it obviously does not refer to the way Gregorian chant was sung: solemn chant rather than simple.)

Karl Gustav Fellerer states that “solemn” in the title of K 339 is not a liturgical term at all, but simply denotes a piece of church music for soloists, choir and orchestra.

Solemnis ist hier nicht eine liturgische Bezeichnung, sondern die im 18. Jahrhundert übliche Kennzeichnung der Kirchenmusic für Soli, Chor und Orchester.

Fellerer, p viii

This is a purely musical perspective, and implies that any such music – in this case a non-Gregorian musical setting of vespers of a confessor – could be used for *any* feast of a confessor. The very use of such music made the occasion “solemn”. This is possible, at least with respect to music already composed.

However, I cannot imagine that new music would be composed for *any* feast of a confessor. Surely composers and those who commissioned new music had particular saint’s days in mind.

This approach does not seem helpful, and in any case does not identify any particular saint’s day.

Solemn II

The second understanding of “solemn” is liturgical, referring to feast days in the Roman liturgical calendar that are of particular importance and that are therefore referred to as “solemnities”. This status is indicated by the high liturgical rank assigned.

Of the ca 90 feasts of confessors in the Roman liturgical calendar of Mozart’s day, most are of only low to medium rank. One (Saint Francis of Assisi, October 3) has the moderately high rank of “greater double”. However, there is only one really high ranking feast of a confessor; this is St Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with the rank of “double of the first class;” it is celebrated on March 19.

March 19 falls during Lent, however, and the penitential character of Lent would have muted the celebration of the feast of St Joseph. In 1725, for example, Pope Benedict XIII decreed that “The sound of the organ is prohibited during the times of Advent and Lent.”

R. F. Hayburn, *Papal Legislation on Sacred Music 95 A.D. to 1977 A.D.* Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1970, p 87

Orchestral music certainly would not have been permitted. I do not know how Lent was celebrated in Salzburg in Mozart’s day, but if this papal decree was heeded, Mozart’s K 339 would not have been used for the liturgy of St Joseph’s day.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, however, there was great interest, at least in some parts of Europe, in establishing a feast of St Joseph that would be celebrated outside Lent. In some places there was a feast of the Espousals of the Blessed Virgin and St Joseph on January 23, in others a feast of the Patronage of St Joseph on the third Sunday after Easter.

“St Joseph.” <http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/StJoseph.pdf>

If these or similar feasts were included in the local liturgical calendar of Salzburg in Mozart’s day, they might possibly have been the occasion for the composition of K 339. However, the lists of liturgical feasts given in the statutes of the Salzburg cathedral chapter do not include St Joseph at all (Hirnsperger, pp 341-345, for example).

Because St Joseph is not listed among the saints of importance to the cathedral chapter, I conclude that one of his feast days was not likely to have been the occasion for which K 339 was created.

Solemn III

The term “Solemn vespers,” finally, was another technical term in the Roman Catholic liturgy prior to 1970. Exploring this understanding of “solemn” contributes much to the search for the identity of the saint’s day for which K 339 was composed.

1. “Solemn vespers” has two dimensions. First, it pertains to and is celebrated on certain high ranking feast days. Second, the liturgy of vespers is celebrated with more elaborate ceremony than usual. Such occasions would of course be ideal occasions for special music. The first point (high ranking feasts) is of great relevance to the question at hand; the second point (more elaborate) is not of interest in this regard. Most of the feast days on which solemn vespers might be celebrated are found in the Roman liturgical calendar; a few are included in the local liturgical calendar of Salzburg.

“Vespers”, pp 345-365 in Laurence J. O’Connell, *The Book of Ceremonies*.
Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing 1944

“De vesperis Solemnibus”, pp 505-565 in Innocentius Wapelhorst, *Compedium Sacrae Liturgiae juxta Ritum Romanum*, 11 ed. New York: Benziger Brothers 1931

“Caeremoniae servandae cum officium divinum solemniter cantatur. De Vesperis,” pp 411-416 in J. F. van der Stappen, *Sacra Liturgia*, 2nd ed. Vol I. Mechlin: H. Dessain 1904

2. Fellerer’s definition of “solemn”, discussed above, might give the impression that the term “solemn vespers” with the meaning just described, was not in use in Mozart’s day. That is not the case, however; since 1629, phrases such as solemn or more solemn vespers, or vespers celebrated solemnly or more solemnly, are found in decrees of the Roman department known as the Congregation for Rites. For example:

an conveniat quando Canonicus solemniter paratus cantat Vesperas - vol I, nn 15 (1667)

quando Episcopus solemniter cantat Vesperas vel celebrat - vol I, nn 512 (1629)

quando episcopus solemniter per se ipsum celebrat Vesperas in pontificalibus - vol I, nn 724 (1640)

an ad vesperes solemnnes - vol II, nn 310 (1862)

Decreta Authentica Congregationis Sacrorum Rituum. Romae: Ex Typographia Polyglotta S. C. de Propaganda Fide 1898.

3. It is now appropriate to ask the following question: on which specific liturgical feasts in the Roman liturgical calendar would “solemn vespers” be celebrated? One list of such feast

days is the following:

Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart, Immaculate Conception, Assumption, SS Peter and Paul, All Saints

O'Connell, *Book of Ceremonies*, p 346

Depending on local custom, this list could be expanded to include feast days of slightly lower rank such as the two days following Easter and Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, the feasts of the Annunciation and the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, the Nativity of St John the Baptist, and the Dedication of St Michael the Archangel (O'Connell, p 346). In the Salzburg cathedral the list of feast days that would be celebrated with solemn vespers included the following:

All Saints, Circumcision of the Lord, Purification of the Blessed Virgin, Corpus Christi, Saints Peter and Paul, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin (Hirnsperger, p 341).

Most have the very high rank of double of the first class with octave.

These feasts would be logical and reasonable occasions for the composition of special music. *However, none of them is a feast of a confessor.*

Neal Zaslaw's statement may be considered here: "The cathedral's liturgical calendar included 21 major feasts that would have been preceded the night before by a solemn Vespers performed with orchestra, customarily with the archbishop himself presiding." The basis for the number 21 is not stated, but I presume it has some relationship to the kind of lists given above, which varied somewhat with time and place. Certainly this statement is correct in that special music (whether Gregorian or other) would have been used for such special feasts and for such a special celebration of vespers. However, this statement does not apply to K 339 because it is for a feast of a confessor and none of the feasts listed above is this type of feast.

Neal Zaslaw. [*Program Notes*](#)
Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra 2006

In conclusion, the list of high ranking feast days of the Roman liturgical calendar that have been considered here does not point to the saint's day for which Mozart's K 339 was composed.

4. It turns out to be more fruitful to ask this question: on which liturgical feasts in the *local liturgical calendar of the Salzburg cathedral* might solemn vespers have been celebrated? There are three such feasts, identified as Patron, Titular and Dedication; again these are technical terms of the Roman Catholic liturgy (O'Connell, *Book of Ceremonies*, p 346). "Titular" here refers to the saint or saints in honor of whom the church in question is named. "Patron" here refers to the saint of a place or region. In practice, patron is often used with both meanings. Finally, "Dedication" refers to the anniversary of the day on which the church was dedicated (or consecrated); in this case the Salzburg cathedral.

“De Officiis vel festis specialibus. De Patrono et Titulari Ecclesiae Propriae,” pp 487 ff in Innocentius Wapelhorst, *Compendium Sacrae Liturgiae juxta Ritum Romanum*, ed 11. New York: Benziger Brothers 1931

“De patrono loci et De titulari ecclesiae,” pp 380 ff in J. F. van der Stappen, *Sacra Liturgica*, ed 2, vol I

The feast of the dedication of the Salzburg cathedral is not the feast of a confessor; it is therefore not a possible occasion for which Mozart might have composed K 339. Vespers of the dedication of a church uses a particular set of psalms; see Appendix I.

Titular saints and patron saints might or might not be confessors. Thus these might or might not be possible occasions for the composition of K 339.

The Salzburg cathedral has two titulars (patrons), St Rupert and St Virgil; both of these are confessor bishops. The city and region of Salzburg has one patron, St Rupert, a confessor bishop. A feast of St Rupert or St Virgil, therefore, would have been a possible occasion for Archbishop Colloredo’s commission to Mozart to compose settings of the psalms and Magnificat for the solemn vespers of a confessor.

Of these two saint’s days, a feast of St Rupert is the more important. It was a titular feast of the cathedral with the rank of double of the first class with octave; it has the same rank likewise as patron of Salzburg; the same day has this rank a third time because it is also the anniversary of the dedication of Salzburg cathedral.

The importance of St Rupert’s Day in Salzburg is also shown by the medieval liturgical book known as the Nonnberg Antiphonal. This comes from the Salzburg women’s monastery of Nonnberg and contains liturgical texts for a St festivitatis sancti Rudberti paschali tempore. Niiyama explains (p 219) that this is for use on the rare occasions when Easter Sunday falls on March 27, one of the feast days of St Rupert. That St Rupert’s feast is celebrated even on Easter Sunday indicates that it is very important indeed.

Finally, statutes of the chapter of Salzburg cathedral in the 17th and 18th centuries contain lists of liturgical feasts in order of importance. In section II, a feast called Translationis Sancti Rudberti is listed as no. 1, followed by Translationis Sancti Virgilii (no 3), and somewhat later, Christmas (no 13), Easter (no 22) and Pentecost (no 32). (Hirnsperger, pp 297, 341) The feast of St Rupert therefore has extraordinary importance in the liturgy of Salzburg cathedral.

On the basis of this evidence I consider it *probable* that a feast of St Rupert was the occasion for which Mozart composed the *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* (K 339).

Who was this Rupert? A few pieces of information follow.

Rupert, bishop of Worms, came to Salzburg ca 700 as a traveling missionary at the invitation of the Duke of Bavaria. He spread the Gospel message throughout the region and was given the right to build a church on the site of an ancient Roman town. He founded St Peter's Abbey and the Nonnberg convent and died ca 718. The cathedral was later built by St Virgil, who interred Rupert's bones there on the occasion of its consecration (dedication) in 774.

http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/StRupert_CatholicOrg.pdf

http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/StRupert_SmartNet.pdf

http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/StRupert_Salzburg.pdf

Butler's Lives of the Saints, vol 1, for March 29

Two medieval lives of Saints Rupert and his niece Erentrudis in English translation are available on the World Wide Web:

Two Lives of Sts Rupert (Robert) and Erendruda (Erentraud), translated by Karen Rae Keck.

http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/StRupert_Fordham.pdf

Feast of St Rupert

As already stated, the Salzburg cathedral has two titular or patron saints: Rupert and Virgil. In addition, since 1970 the liturgical calendar for German speaking regions has celebrated a combined or dual feast day of SS Rupert und Virgil. It is therefore necessary to ask if the feast day for which Mozart composed K 339 was that of St Rupert alone or of the two together: SS Rupert and Virgil?

Four lines of evidence support the conclusion that there were separate liturgical feast days for St Rupert and for St Virgil, not a single feast. Discussion of this matter is somewhat complicated by the fact that, as shown in the next section, the local liturgical calendar for Salzburg cathedral included three feasts of St Rupert and two of St Virgil.

1. Liturgical manuscripts used in Salzburg during the 12th to 14th centuries all refer to separate feast days for St Rupert and St Virgil. Fumiko Niiyama has studied four such liturgical books, the so-called Nonnberger Antiphonal (ca 1320), two antiphonals from St Peter's Abbey, one ca 1160 and the second 11/12 century; and a 12th century ordinarium from the cathedral.

Collectively, these name the following feasts of St Rupert: In natalis s. Rudberti; In

Depositione Roberti; and De s. Rvdberto. All refer to what Niiyama gives as Depositio S Rudberti. Other feasts are named as: De sancto Rudberti; In fest s. Roberti; and De translatione beati Rudberti; All refer to what Niiyama gives as Translatio S Rudberti. An additional title, St festivitas sancti Rudberti paschali tempore is the same feast as the Depositio, on the rare occasions when this falls on Easter Sunday. It is apparent that there is no mention of St Virgil in the titles – nor are there any such references in the texts that are available. (Niiyama, p 219)

2. Johann Hirnsperger has made a study of four sets of statutes of the chapter of Salzburg cathedral (this is the body of canons who are the clergy of the cathedral). These were promulgated in 1540, 1606, 1628 and 1733. They refer to SS Rupert and Virgil in several ways. First, as co-patrons of the cathedral they are named together:

sanctorum Rudperti et Virgillii, ecclesiae praedictae patronum Salzburgensis... (p 233)
sanctorum Rudperti & Virgiliis ecclesiae praedictae patronum (p 280)

So far as liturgical feast days are concerned, however, the two saints are always mentioned separately, for example:

dem Translationsfest des hl. Rupert (24 September) - Hirnsperger pp 49, 53, 55, 297, 339
dem Tag der Depositio des hl. Rupert - pp 50, 299, 339
festo divi Ruperti in septembri - pp 271
festo divi Ruperti im herbst - pp 272, 277
Sancti Ruperti - pp 297, 339

Further, Rupert is the more important, or at least one of his feasts is. This is indicated in a numbered list of 43 important saints and other feast days (Hirnsperger, 297, 339).

1. Translationis Sancti Ruperti
2. Dedicationis Ecclesiae
3. Translationis Sancti Virgillii

9. Depositionis Sancti Virgillii
21. Depositionis Sancti Ruperti

Why the Depositionis Sancti Virgillii should be more important than that of St Rupert is not known.

Finally, the archbishop is once referred to as occupying the chair of St Rupert -- that is, he is Rupert's successor as bishop. Virgil is not mentioned.

Auf dem Stuhl des hl. Rupert - p 105

3. A third line of evidence comes from a contemporary and friend of Mozart, Michael Haydn (1737-1806). He was Kapellmeister at Salzburg cathedral from 1762, and

succeeded Mozart as court and cathedral organist. He composed a cantata titled St Rupert in 1778 and a Missa St Ruperti in 1782. Neither of these compositions include St Virgil in the title.

C. H. Sherman and T. Donley Thomas, *Johann Michael Haydn (1737-1806): a chronological thematic catalogue of his works*. Stuyvesant NY: Pendragon Press 1983

Karl August Rosenthal, "The Salzburg church music of Mozart and his predecessors", in *The Musical Quarterly* 18 (1932) 559-577 [here 562]

International Trumpet Guild [the cantata]
<http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/TrumpetGuild2005.pdf>

"Michael Haydn"
http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/MichaelHaydn_Wikipedia.pdf

"Joseph Michael Haydn"
www.carus-verlag.com/index.php3?selSprache=1&BLink=HOME

Gary Smith. "Michael Haydn" in Mozart Forum
<http://www.mozartforum.com>

4. Finally, an important civic festival was called Ruperti-Kirtag: literally Rupert's church-day. This is a holiday on the feast day of St Rupert that is also on the anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral named in honor of both St Rupert and St Virgil. St Virgil is never named in connection with this festival.

On the basis of these lines of evidence I believe that it is *probable* that Mozart composed K 339 for a feast of St Rupert alone; St Virgil was not included.

September 24

Having established the probability that St Rupert is the confessor for whose feast Mozart composed the *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore*, it remains to determine on what day in 1780 this was celebrated. The following lines of evidence are considered.

1. In the Roman Martyrology, the feast of St Rupert is given as March 27:

March 27. At Salzburg in Germany, St Rupert, bishop and confessor, who spread the Gospel extensively in Bavaria and Austria.

In *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, which usually is closely related to the Martyrology, St Rupert's biography is given under the date of March 29. The basis for this difference is not known.

It should be noted that March 27 usually falls within Lent, and as explained above, this would affect the type of music used in the liturgy.

2. In the Roman liturgical calendar, St Rupert is not named at all, nor is St Virgil. This indicates that the local liturgical calendar is of particular importance here.

3. The medieval liturgical manuscripts studied by Niiyama name two feasts of St Rupert, one on March 27 and the other on September 24 (Niiyama, 219-220). The former is that referred to by Niiyama as the *Depositio S. Rudperti*, the latter that referred to as the *Translatio*.

4. The statutes of the cathedral chapter studied by Hirnsperger name three feasts of St Rupert, two of these are March 27 and September 24; the date of the third is not given. The feast celebrated in September is given a higher priority (no. 1) than that in March (no. 21). (Hirnsperger, pp 341, 343)

5. The date of the consecration (dedication) of the Salzburg cathedral is also relevant here. The occasion for its first consecration in 774 was also the occasion on which the remains of St Rupert were interred in the cathedral (hence the term *translatio*). The feast of the *translatio* on September 24 is therefore more important than the other feast, which commemorates Rupert's death. The missal now in use in German-speaking regions says:

Von ihm [S Virgil] wurde der Dom zu Salzburg erbaut und am 24 September 774 geweiht.

Messbuch. Die Feier der heiligen Messe. Für die Bistümer des deutschen Sprachgebietes, 1984

Other sources state:

On September 24, 774, on the occasion of the first consecration of Salzburg Cathedral, the remains of St Rupert were brought from Worms, where he had died, to Salzburg and were ceremoniously interred in a crypt.

http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/StRupert_Salzburg.pdf

Historically, the Salzburg cathedral was first consecrated on September 24 in the year 774. The patron saints were SS Rupert and Virgil. The cathedral was burned and rebuilt in 1177, but apparently not reconsecrated. It was again rebuilt in the 17th century and reconsecrated on September 25, 1628. Finally, it was bombed during World War II, rebuilt and again consecrated in 1959 [the exact day is not stated].

<http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/SalzburgCathedral.pdf>

6. The civic holiday called Rupert's Kirtag is held on September 24 and surrounding days.

St Rupert is the patron saint of Salzburg, and locals have held a celebration in his honour since the 14th century.

<http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/SalzburgTour.pdf>

To this day, September 24 is marked throughout Austria with a St Rupert's Day country fair, Ruperti Kirtag.

http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/StRupert_SmartNet.pdf

Till today, the 24th of September, St Rupert's Day has remained the main public holiday in the city and province of Salzburg. As in centuries before, a fair called the Ruperti Kirtag is held around this date which, in former times, also had important economic relevance.

http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/StRupert_Salzburg.pdf

Known as Kirtag, Kirchtage or Kirchweih, the fair is held once a year, generally on the feast day of the patron saint In Salzburg City, the famous Ruperti-Kirtag runs on the days on and around September 24, the feast of the SalzburgerLand's patron saint, St Rupert....

<http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/RupertiKirtag.pdf>

7. Since 1970, September 24 has been the combined feast day of SS Rupert and Virgil in German speaking regions. This is titled, "Hl. Rupert und hl. Virgil, Bischöfe, Glaubensboten".

It may be concluded that, at least in Salzburg, the feast of St Rupert on September 24 is more significant than the March 27 feast. I conclude therefore that September 24, 1780, is the *probable* date for which Mozart composed K 339.

Finally, it must be recalled that the triple feast of the Titular, Patron, and Dedication all are doubles of the first class *with octave*. "Octave" means that feast is commemorated daily for a week. More importantly, the octave day is itself celebrated as a feast day of high rank. Thus September 31 would have been celebrated liturgically with almost the same degree of solemnity as September 24. It is therefore at least *possible* that Mozart's *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* was used on the octave day as well as on the feast day a week earlier.

First Vespers

As a very important feast day, the liturgy for St Rupert's Day would have included first vespers as well as second vespers. The latter was celebrated the afternoon or evening of September 24 – the conclusion (except for compline) of a day of prayer and festival. First

vespers, however, was celebrated the preceding afternoon or evening – though liturgically this was considered the feast of St Rupert on the basis of a sundown-to-sundown reckoning of the day.

On some saint's days the psalms for first vespers and second vespers are the same; for some, however, they are different. See **Appendix I**. In the case of a confessor bishop, the first four psalms are the same but the last one is Laudate Dominum (116) for first vespers and Memento Domini David (131) for second vespers. It may be noted that for vespers of a confessor not a bishop, the psalms are the same in both cases.

Did Mozart compose the *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* for first vespers or second vespers of the feast of St Rupert in September? Several lines of evidence may be considered.

1. The psalms of K 339 conclude with Laudate Dominum, not Memento Domini David; they therefore appear to be intended for first vespers.

2. Neal Zaslaw states that “major feasts... would have been preceded the night before by a solemn Vespers...” though he does not state his evidence or reasoning. He is obviously speaking of first vespers.

Neal Zaslaw. [*Program Notes*](#): Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra 2006

3. The statutes of the Salzburg cathedral chapter divide the liturgies of the year into nine groups, of decreasing importance. In each case certain specific expectations are stated: canons are to do this or that in order to receive their expected stipend. In the case of the Prima Classis, the most important feasts, the expectations include participation at Mass with processions, and both first and second vespers.

Qualibet die ex infrascriptis, tam ob Sacrificia Missarum cum Processionibus, quam primas et secundas Vesperas distribuuntur inter praesente floreni decem et octo videlicet qualibet vice dictarum functionum tertia pars. (Hirnsperber, 340)

In the case of the next group (II. Classis), which includes two feasts of St Rupert and two of St Virgil, the expectations include participation in Mass and *first* vespers:

Sequentibus vero diebus distribuuntur pro Sacrificio Missae et primis Vesperis eodem modo inter praesentes floreni duodecim videlicet medietas pro qualibet functione. (Hirnsperger, 341)

This would seem to support the use of K 339 for first vespers of the feast of St Rupert.

4. Fellerer has a different view. He says that “the great musical Vespers were particularly sung at the feast day proper” – hence at second vespers. He continues, “The first Vespers is given the day before and is therefore presumably seldom arranged in great musical form” - hence not at first vespers.

Genau müsste sie heissen de Confessore non Pontifice, da die grossen musikalischen Vespern vorwiegend am Festtag selbst, an dem die Liturgie die 2. Vesper erfordert, gesungen wurden, während die 1. Vesper, bei der an Festen Confessor Pontifex die von Mozart vertonte Psalmfolge vorliegt, am Vortag (Vigil) gegeben ist, also wohl nur selten in der grossen musikalischen Form gestaltet wurde. (Fellerer, viii)

However, direct evidence on this points is not referred to.

I consider the evidence in favor of first vespers to be the more weighty.

Feast of Saint Virgil

Although Saint Rupert may be considered the primary saint of Salzburg, Saint Virgil is still also important. Here I consider the possibility that Mozart may have composed K 339 for a feast of this saint. The primary feast day of Saint Virgil is November 27, the date of his death in 784. This must be what is called the *Depositionis S Virgilii* by the statutes of the Salzburg cathedral chapter. The Roman Martyrology for November 27 states:

At Salzburg in Germany, St Virgil, bishop and apostle of Carinthia, who was placed among the number of saints by Pope Gregory IX.

In November 1780, however, Mozart was busy working on his opera *Idomeneo, re di Creta* (K 336). He had received a commission for this work sometime earlier in the year from Karl Theodor, Elector of Bavaria. Mozart left Salzburg for Munich on November 5, 1780, had an audience there with the Elector on November 12, and worked on this opera until it was staged in Munich on January 29, 1781. His absence from Salzburg and his preoccupation with the opera make it unlikely (at least in my view) that K 339 was composed and used for the feast of St Virgil on November 27, 1780.

“K 366. *Idomeneo, re di Creta*”

<http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/MozartK366.pdf>

“Chronology: 1776-1780”

http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/Mozart1776_80.pdf

“Mozart Biography”

<http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/MozartWaysBio.pdf>

In addition, Prince Archbishop Colloredo must have been distracted by the news that Empress Maria Theresa was seriously ill; she died on November 29 of that year, after having been ill since November 8. There would have been prayers for the Empress' recovery and liturgies in

Salzburg accompanying her final illness and death.

“Maria Theresa”

<http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/MariaTheresa.pdf>

The statutes of the Salzburg cathedral chapter, however, also list a second feast day of St Virgil, called the Translationis Sancti Virgilii, and Hirnsperber gives its date as September 28 (p 57). I have not seen any other reference to this feast, but it must have been significant; it is ranked no. 3 in importance after the Translatio S Ruperti and the Dedication of the cathedral. The date of September 28 puts it just four days after the Titular, Patronal and Dedication feasts of September 24 and the civic festival of Ruperti-Kirtag; in practice all of these events might have merged into one extended liturgical celebration and festival.

On the basis of these considerations, the feast of the translation of St Virgil on September 28 is considered to be a *possible* occasion for which Mozart might have composed the *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore*.

A Millennium Project?

Mrs Klara Moser has pointed out to me that Salzburg cathedral was dedicated /consecrated in the year 774 and therefore would have celebrated its millennium in 1774. It would certainly have been appropriate to commission and compose special music for this occasion.

She has also noted that among the pieces that Mozart is known to have composed during 1774 was a setting of the psalm *Dixit Dominus* plus the *Magnificat* (K 193). In addition, according to Kellerer, he wrote music for the introductory and concluding verses of the office of vespers.

Mozart hatte bereits 1774 für Salzburg ein *Dixit* und *Magnificat*, also ein Eingangs- und Schlusstück der Vesper geschrieben. Für welche Gelegenheit dieses *Dixit* und *Magnificat* KV 193 entstand, ist ebensowenig bekannt wie die Anlässe, zu denen Mozart in den Jahren 1779 und 1780 die vollständigen Vespere KV 321 und 339 schrieb. (Kellerer vii)

Mrs Moser suggests the possibility that Mozart originally intended to compose a complete setting for Vespers (all five psalms and *Magnificat*) for September 24, 1774, but for some reason did not complete this project. This intention finally came to fruition in 1780 with the composition of K 339.

Conclusions

By making use of basic information regarding the Roman Catholic liturgy in the time of Mozart, plus relatively recent studies of medieval liturgical manuscripts from Salzburg and about the liturgical responsibilities of the canons of Salzburg cathedral in the eighteenth century, it is possible to shed light on a long-standing “minor mozartian mystery”.

Thus it seems *probable* that the occasion for which Mozart composed his *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* (K 339) was first vespers of a feast of St Rupert on September 24, 1780. As an alternative, it seems *possible* that this occasion was a feast of St Virgil on September 28. Two other candidate feast days are not supported by the available evidence: St Joseph, and a feast of St Virgil on November 27.

Because the evidence used in this study is indirect, it remains to be seen if a future examination of liturgical books actually in use in the Salzburg cathedral in 1780 supports these conclusions or leads to some other result.

Appendix I: Psalms for Vespers

Psalms for vespers are taken from the sequence 109-144 (Vulgate; Hebrew/NRSV 110-144) (here Vulgate numbering will be used). Here I and II refer to first and second vespers, respectively.

Common of Sunday

Dixit Dominus (109) + Confitebor (110) + Beatus vir (111) + Laudate pueri (112) + In exitu (113)

Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary (I, II)

Dixit Dominus + Laudate pueri + Laetatus sum + Nisi Dominus + Lauda Jerusalem

Common of Martyrs

I: Dixit Dominus + Confitebor + Beatus vir + Laudate pueri + Laudate Dominum

II: Dixit Dominus + Confitebor + Beatus vir + Laudate pueri + Credidi

Common of Virgins (I, II) and of Holy Women (I, II)

Dixit Dominus + Laudate Pueri + Laetatus sum + Nisi Dominus + Lauda Jerusalem

Common of Apostles and Evangelists

I: Dixit Dominus + Confitebor + Beatus vir + Lauda Pueri + Laudate Dominum

II: Laudate pueri + Credidi + In contendendo + Domine probasti me

Common of the Dedication of a Church (I, II)

Dixit Dominus + Confitebor + Beatus vir + Laudate pueri + Lauda Jerusalem

Common of a Confessor Bishop

I: Dixit Dominus + Confitebor + Beatus vir + Lauda pueri + Laudate Dominum

II: Dixit Dominus + Confitebor + Beatus vir + Laudate pueri + Memento Domine David

Common of a Confessor not a Bishop (I, II)

Dixit Dominus + Confitebor + Beatus vir + Laudate pueri + Laudate Dominum

Appendix II: Vespers - Order of Service

Although the five psalms plus Magnificat are used at vespers, and indeed comprise the largest part of it, they are not the whole of this liturgy. The order of service for vespers as a whole on an important feast day is shown here:

Opening verse and response

Psalms

First psalm with doxology, preceded and followed by its antiphon

Second psalm with doxology, preceded and followed by its antiphon

Third psalm with doxology, preceded and followed by its antiphon

Fourth psalm with doxology, preceded and followed by its antiphon

Fifth psalm with doxology, preceded and followed by its antiphon

Chapter (capitulum)

Hymn

Verse and response

Magnificat with doxology, preceded and followed by its antiphon

Collect

Concluding verse and response

(And possibly other short prayers)