

Friday of the Second Week of Advent

The Liturgical Year

Dom Prosper Gueranger

Come, let us adore the King our Lord, who is to come.

From the Prophet Isaias

Chapter 24

Behold the Lord shall lay waste the earth, and shall strip it: and shall afflict the face thereof, and scatter abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be as with the people, so with the priest; and as with the servant, so with his master; as with the handmaid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with him that calls for his money, so with him that owes. With desolation shall the earth be laid waste, and it shall be utterly spoiled: for the Lord has spoken this word. The earth mourned and faded away, and is weakened: the world faded away, the height of the people of the earth is weakened. And the earth is infected by the inhabitants thereof: because they have transgressed the laws, they have changed the ordinance, they have broken the everlasting covenant.

Therefore shall a curse devour the earth, and the inhabitants thereof shall sin; and therefore they that dwell therein shall be mad, and few men shall be left. The vintage has mourned, the vine has languished away, all the merry-hearted have sighed. The mirth of timbrels has ceased, the noise of them that rejoice is ended, the melody of the harp is silent. They shall not drink wine with a song; the drink shall be bitter to them that drink it. The city of vanity is broken down, every house is shut up, no man comes in. There shall be a crying for wine in the streets: all mirth is forsaken, the joy of the earth is gone away.

Desolation is left in the city, and calamity shall oppress the gates. For it shall be thus in the midst of the earth, in the midst of the people, as if a few olives that remain should be shaken out of the olive tree: or grapes, when the vintage is ended. These shall lift up their voice, and shall give praise, when the Lord shall be glorified, they shall make a joyful noise from the sea. Therefore glorify ye the Lord in instruction: the name of the Lord God of Israel in the islands of the sea. From the ends of the earth we have heard praises, the glory of the just one.

Thus was the earth in desolation when the Messiah came to deliver and save it. So diminished, so decayed, were truths among the children of men, that the human race was bordering on its ruin. The knowledge of the true God was becoming rarer as the world grew older; Idolatry had made everything in creation an object of its adulterous worship; the practical result of a religion which was but gross materialism, was frightful immorality; man was for ever at war with man; and the only safeguards of what social order still existed in the world, were the execrable laws of slavery and extermination. Among the countless inhabitants of the globe, a mere handful could be found who were seeking God! They were as rare as the olives that remain on the tree after a careful plucking, or as grape bunches after the vintage is ended. Of this happy few were, among the Jewish people, those true Israelites whom our Saviour chose for His disciples; and, among the Gentiles, the Magi that came

from the east, asking for the new-born King; and later on, Cornelius the centurion, whom the angel of the Lord directed to St. Peter. But with what faith and joy did they acknowledge the incarnate God, and what their hymns of glad gratitude, when they found that they had been privileged, above others, to see with their own eyes the promised Saviour!

Now, all this will again happen when the time draws near of the second coming of the Messiah. The earth will once more be filled with desolation, and mankind will be again a slave of its self-degradation. The ways of men will again grow corrupt; and, this time, the malice of their evil will be the greater, because they will have received Him who is the Light of the world, the Word of life. A profound sadness will sit heavy on all nations, and every effort for their well-being will seem paralyzed; they, and the earth they live on, will be conscious of decrepitude; and yet it will never once strike them that the world is drawing to an end.

There will be great scandals; there shall fall stars from heaven, that is, many of those who had been masters in Israel shall apostatize, and their light shall be changed into darkness. There shall be days of temptation, and faith shall grow slack: so that when the Son of Man shall appear, faith shall scarce be found on the earth.

Let it not be, Oh Lord, that we live to see those days of temptation; or, if it be Thy will that they overtake us, make our hearts firm in their allegiance to Thy holy Church, which will be the only beacon left to Thy faithful children in that fierce storm. Grant, Oh Lord, that we may be of the number of those chosen olives, of those elect bunches of grapes, wherewith Thou wilt complete the rich harvest which Thou wilt garner for ever into Thy house.

Preserve intact within us the deposit of faith which Thou has entrusted to us; let our eye be fixed on that Orient of which the Church speaks to us, and where Thou art suddenly to appear in Thy majesty. When that day of Thine comes, and we behold Thy triumph, we will shout our glad delight, and then, like eagles which cluster round the body, we shall be taken up to meet Thee in the air, as Thy apostle speaks, and thus shall we for ever be with Thee. Then we shall *hear the praises and glory of the Just One, from the ends of this earth*, which it is Thy good will to preserve until the decrees of Thy mercy and justice shall have been fully executed. Oh Jesus! We are the work of Thy hands; save us, and be merciful to us on that great day.

Hymn of Advent

(Mozarabic breviary, in the second week of Advent)

Only-begotten Son of the Father, thou comes to us by the Virgin, consecrating us all by the dew of baptism, and by faith regenerating us.

The Most High coming from heaven has taken on himself the form of man, returning after conquering death, and giving us the joys of a new life.

Wherefore, we beseech thee, Oh Redeemer, descend upon us in thy mercy, and give to our hearts the brightness of the divine light.

To God the Father, and to his only Son, and to the holy Paraclete, be glory for ever and ever.

Amen.

Prayer from the Gallican Missal

(In Adventu Domini, Collecta)

Grant, we beseech thee, Oh almighty God, that our souls be filled with a desire of being inflamed with thy Spirit; that being nourished with the divine gift, as lamps with their oil, we may shine as bright lights before the face of Christ thy Son, who is coming to us.