

Monday of the Fourth Week of Advent

The Liturgical Year

Dom Prosper Gueranger

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The Lord is now nigh: come, let us adore.

From the Prophet Isaiah. - Chapter 42

But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend; in whom I have taken thee from the ends of the earth, and from the remote parts thereof have called thee, and said to thee: Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee, and have not east thee away. Fear not, for I am with thee; turn not aside, for I am thy God: I have strengthened thee, and have helped thee, and the right hand of my just One has upheld thee. Behold all that fight against thee shall be confounded and ashamed: they shall be as nothing, and the men shall perish that strive against thee. Thou shall seek them, and shall not find the men that resist thee: they shall be as nothing, and as a thing consumed the men that war against thee: for I am the Lord thy God, who take thee by the hand, and say to thee: Fear not, I have helped thee. Fear not, thou worm of Jacob, you that are dead of Israel: I have helped thee, says the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the holy One of Israel I have made thee as a new thrashing wain with teeth like a saw: thou shall thrash the mountains, and break them in pieces: and shall make the bills as chaff. Thou shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shall rejoice in the Lord, in the holy One of Israel thou shall be joyful.

It is thus Thou raises us up from our abject lowliness, Oh eternal Son of the Father! It is thus Thou consoles us under the fear we so justly feel by reason of our sins. Thou says to us: *Israel, my servant! Jacob, whom I have chosen, seed of Abraham, in whom I have called thee from the remote parts of the earth! Fear not, for I am with thee.* But, Oh divine Word, how low Thou hast had to come, that Thou might be thus with us! We could never have come to Thee, for between us and Thee there was fixed an immense chaos. Nay, we had not so much as the desire to see Thee, so dull of heart had sin made us: and had we desired it, our eyes could never have borne the splendour of Thy majesty.

Then it was, that Thou didst descend to us in person, yet so that our weakness could look fixedly upon Thee, because veiled under the cloud of Thy Humanity. Who could doubt,' says St. Bernard, 'of there being some great cause pending, seeing that so great a Majesty deigned to come down, from so far off, into so unworthy a place? Oh yes, there is some great thing at stake, for the mercy is great, and the commiseration is extreme, and the charity is abundant. And why, think you, did He come? He came from the mountain to seek the hundredth sheep that was lost. Oh wonderful condescension, a God seeking! Oh wonderful worth of man, that he should be sought by God! If man should therefore boast, he is surely not unwise; for he boasts not for aught that he sees in himself as of himself, but for his very Maker making such account of him. All the riches and all the glory of the world, and all that men covet in it, all is less than his glory, nay, is nothing, when compared to it. What is man, Oh Lord, that Thou should magnify him? Or why dost Thou set Thy Heart upon him? Delay not, then, good Shepherd! Show Thyself to Thy sheep. Thou knows them; not only has Thou seen them from heaven, Thou also looks on them with love, from the womb of Mary where Thou still art concealed. They also wish to know Thee; they are

impatient to behold Thy divine features, to hear Thy voice and to follow Thee to the pastures that Thou hast promised them.'

Hymn for the Time of Advent

(Composed by St. Ambrose. It is in the Ambrosian breviary for the sixth Sunday of Advent)

It is a mystery of the Church, it is a hymn that we sing to Christ, the Word of the Father, become the Son of a Virgin.

Among women, thou alone, Oh Mary! was chosen in this and was made worthy to carry in thy holy womb him who is thy Lord.

This is a great mystery, that is given to Mary: that she should see the God, who created all things, become her own Child!

How truly art thou full of grace, ever glorious Virgin, for of thee is born the Christ, by whom all things were made.

Come then, ye people, let us pray to the Virgin Mother of God, that she would obtain for us peace and indulgent mercy.

Glory be to thee, Oh Lord, who was born of the Virgin, and to the Father and the Holy Ghost, for everlasting ages. Amen.

Prayer from the Ambrosian Missal

(In the Mass of the fifth Sunday of Advent)

Oh God, who, seeing man fallen a prey to death, did resolve to redeem him by the coming of thine only begotten Son; grant, we beseech thee, that they who confess his glorious Resurrection, may deserve to be for ever with their Redeemer. Who, with thee, lives and reigns for ever. Amen.