

Saturday of the First 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 7

And the Lord spoke again to Achaz, saying: Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God, either unto the depth of hell or unto the height above. And Achaz said: I will not ask, and I will not tempt the Lord. And he said: Hear ye, therefore, Oh house of David: Is it a small thing for you to be grievous to men, that you are grievous to my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel.

Let your hearts be filled with hope and joy at hearing this fair and sweet prophecy: *A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son.* These words contain the salvation of the world, as these others express its perdition: *'The woman took of the fruit of the tree, and did eat, and gave unto her husband.'* This Virgin promised to us has at length come: the divine Fruit is in her womb. By her, Eve's disobedience is repaired, the world is raised from its fall, the head of the serpent is crushed, God Himself is more glorified by the fidelity of this second Virgin, than He had been outraged by the disobedience of the first. The consent of Mary exercises an immense influence in the saving of the world.

It is true that the Word Himself is coming; 'but,' says St. Bernard, 'Mary is the way whereby He comes; it is from her virginal womb He issues, as the Bridegroom from the nuptial chamber. Let us endeavour, therefore, to go up to Jesus through Mary, for Jesus came down to us through her. By thee, Oh blessed one that didst find grace, Oh parent of life, Oh mother of salvation, may we have access to thy Son! May He, who was given to us by thee, receive us by thee. May He admit thy purity, and, for its sake, forgive our impurities: may He give us the pardon of our pride, because of the pleasure He took in thy humility. May thy abundant charity cover the multitude of our sins.

May thy glorious fruitfulness get us fruitfulness of merit. Our Lady! Our mediatrix! Our advocate! Reconcile us to thy Son, commend us to thy Son, present us to thy Son. By the grace thou didst find, by the prerogative thou didst merit, by the Mercy thou didst bring forth, grant, Oh blessed Virgin, that Jesus, who deigned to become, through thy maternity, partaker of our weakness and misery, may, through thy intercession, make us partakers of His glory and bliss.'

Prose in Honour of the Blessed Virgin

(Composed by Abelard; it is found in all the Roman-French missals)

God, the lover of man, sends to the Virgin no less an angel than him who is called God's strength, the Archangel Gabriel.

May this strong messenger be speedily at his work; may he stay the rights and laws of nature in the Virgin's delivery.

May the King of glory, when born, triumph over nature; may he reign and command; may he take away from the midst of men all leaven and rust.

May he humble proud heads; may this God, mighty in war, trample in his power on the necks of the haughty.

May he cast forth the prince of this world; and make his Mother share with him the empire which his Father has given him.

Go forth, messenger of God, announce those gifts; lift up, by the virtue of thy annunciation, the veil of the ancient Scripture.

Approach, tell thy announcement: say, when thou art in her presence: "Hail!" Say: "Oh full of grace!" Say:

"The Lord is with thee!" And then: "Fear not!"

Receive, Oh Virgin, the divine deposit; by him fulfil thy chaste purpose, and keep thy vow.

The Maid hears and accepts the announcement; she believes and conceives, and brings forth a Son, but he is the admirable,

The counsellor of mankind, God and Man, Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace.

May his firmness render us firm, lest human frailty should make us stumble into the abyss.

But may the Giver of pardon, granting us pardon and grace, obtained by the Mother of grace, dwell within us.

May he that grants us pardon of our sins, wipe away all our guilt, and give us the country in the starry heaven. Amen.

Prayer From: The Gallican Sacramentary

(Christmas Eve)

Oh Emmanuel, God with us, Christ the Son of God, who did announce that thou wouldst be born of a Virgin, and did, as Lord, create Mary, the Mother whose Son thou art: grant us, that being, like her, created by Thee out of nothing, we may be rewarded, like her, for our faith in thee.