

Thursday of the Fourth Week of Advent

The Liturgical Year

Dom Prosper Gueranger

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

From the Prophet Isaiah - Chapter 64

Oh that thou would rend the heavens, and would come down; the mountains would melt away at thy presence; they would melt as at the burning of fire; the waters would burn with fire; that thy name might be made known to thy enemies: that the nations might tremble at thy presence. When thou shalt do wonderful things, we shall not bear them: thou didst come down and at thy presence the mountains melted away. From the beginning of the world they have not heard, nor perceived with the ears: the eye has not seen, Oh God, besides thee, what things thou has prepared for them that wait for thee. Thou hast met him that rejoices, and does justice: in thy ways they shall remember thee: behold thou art angry, and we have sinned; in them we have been always, and we shall be saved. And we are all become as one unclean, and all our justices as the rag of a menstruous woman: and we have all fallen as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. There is none that calls upon thy name, that rises up and takes hold of thee: thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast crushed us in the end of our iniquity. And now, Oh Lord, thou art our Father, and we are clay: and thou art our maker, and we all are the works of thy hands. Be not very angry, Oh Lord, and remember no longer our iniquity: behold, see, we are all thy people. The city of thy sanctuary is become a desert. Sion is made a desert, Jerusalem is desolate. The house of our holiness, and of our glory, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt with fire, and all our lovely things are turned into ruins.

Oh God of our fathers, delay not, but show Thyself unto us. The city which Thou loves is desolate; come and raise up Jerusalem; avenge the glory of her temple. This was the cry of the prophet; Thou hast heard it, and hast come to deliver Sion from her captivity, giving her a new era of glory and holiness. Thou hast come, not to destroy but to fulfil the law; and, by Thy visit, Sion has been changed into the Church, Thy bride. But why, Oh Thou her beloved Saviour, why hast Thou turned away Thy face? Why is this Church of Thy love left in the wilderness, weeping like Jeremias over the ruins of the sanctuary, and as Rachel over her children that had been taken from her? Why has her inheritance been delivered to the stranger? By Thy power, she had become the mother of countless children; she had nourished them; she had taught them, in Thy name, the things that pertain to the present and the future life; and these ungrateful children have turned against her. She has been driven from nation to nation, bearing away with her the heavenly treasure of faith; her mysteries have ceased to be celebrated where once they were the glory and happiness of the people; and from Thy throne above, Oh divine Word, Creator of the universe, Thou sees everywhere, throughout the earth, altars overturned and temples profaned. Oh, come, then, and rekindle the smouldering fire of faith.

Remember Thy apostles and Thy martyrs; remember Thy saints who have founded Churches, and honoured them by their virtues and miracles; remember Thy bride the Church, and support her during her earthly pilgrimage, until the number of Thy elect is filled up. She longs to possess Thee in the eternal light of the vision; but Thou has given her a heart with such mother's love, that she will not leave her children as long as there is one to save, nor cease to save until that day come when there shall no more be a militant Church, but the one sole triumphant Church, inebriated with the enjoyment of the sight and embraces of her God. But that last day has not yet come,

Oh Jesus, there is yet time for Thee to descend from heaven and visit Thy vineyard. Restore to the branches of the tree the leaves which have fallen in the storm of iniquity. Let this tree of Thy predilection bud forth new branches; and the old ones, which have separated from it, and have seemed to force Thy justice to cast them in the fire, let them be once more grafted on the parent trunk, so torn by their rupture from her. Come, Oh Jesus, for the sake of Thy Church; she is dearer to Thee than was the Jerusalem of old.

**Hymn taken from the Anthology of the Greeks
(December 21)**

Thy womb, Oh Mother of God, is the heap of wheat of the Canticle; carrying, in an ineffable manner, the ear of corn, which, like no other, grew without being sown; thy Child is the Word, and thou wilt give him birth in Bethlehem's cave: he it is will lovingly feed every creature with the knowledge of God, and free the human race from deadly hunger.

Whence comes thou, Oh pure Virgin? Thy father and mother, who are they? How does thou carry thy Creator in thy arms? Mother, and yet a Virgin! These are great graces, and stupendous mysteries, which have been done in thee, all holy creature! We adorn the cave as it behoves us, and we look for the star in the heavens: the Magi are coming from the east to our western world, to see the Saviour of men shining in thy arms as a bright torch.

Oh Mary, fair palace of our Master, how is it thou comes into so poor a cave, there to give birth to the King our Lord, Oh all holy Virgin, bride of God ?

Eve, indeed, by the crime of disobedience brought a curse into the world: but thou, Virgin Mother of God, by the flower thou bears, has made blessing bloom in the world; therefore do we all magnify thee.

The Mother of God, when the birth of Christ was near, spoke thus to her spouse: Be not sad, Joseph, finding that I am mother; for thou shall see him who is to be born of me, and thou shall rejoice and adore him as thy God. Let us commemorate this divine Mother, saying: Be glad, Oh full of grace, the Lord is with thee, and with us by thee.

**Prayer from the Ambrosian Missal
(In the Mass of the first Sunday of Advent)**

Oh God, who, by thine only begotten Son, has made us to be a new creature unto thyself, mercifully look on the works which thy mercy has produced, and cleanse us, in the coming of thy Son, from all the stains of our old habits. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.