

Tuesday 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 14

Her time is near at hand, and her days shall not be prolonged. For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose out of Israel, and will make them rest upon their own ground: and the stranger shall be joined with them, and shall adhere to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them into their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall make them captives that had taken them, and shall subdue their oppressors. And it shall come to pass in that day, that when God shall give thee rest from thy labour, and from thy vexation, and from the hard bondage, wherewith thou did serve before, thou shall take up this parable against the king of Babylon, and shall say: How is the oppressor come to nothing? The tribute has ceased? The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the rod of the rulers, that struck the people in wrath with an incurable wound, that brought nations under in fury, that persecuted in a cruel manner. How art thou fallen from heaven, Oh Lucifer, who did rise in the morning? How art thou fallen to the earth, that did wound the nations? And thou said in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the aides of the north: I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. But yet thou shall be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit.

Thy ruin, Oh Lucifer, is irreparable! Thou refused to humble thyself before God, and thou was cast into hell. Thy pride then sought a compensation for this thy deep humiliation, and thou caused the ruin of the human race, out of hatred for God and His creatures. Thou did succeed in inspiring him, who was formed out of dust, with that same pride which had caused thine own destruction. By thee sin came into this world, and by sin death: the human race seemed now a victim which never could escape thy vengeance. Forced to give up thy hopes of a heavenly royalty, thou aimed at reigning in hell and destroying the creatures of God as they came from His creating love. But again thou art foiled and conquered. Thy reign was in pride; pride alone could form thy court and give thee subjects; now, see how the sovereign Lord of all things uproots thy kingdom: He Himself comes to teach His creatures humility; and He teaches it, not by laws given with awful majesty, as once on Sinai, but by Himself meekly practising that heavenly humility, which alone can raise up them that had fallen by pride. Tremble, proud spirit, thy sceptre is to be broken!

In thy haughty wisdom, thou disdained this humble and lowly Virgin of Nazareth, who holds within herself, in adoring silence, the mystery of thy ruin and our salvation. The Child whom she carries in her womb, and who is so soon to be born, has long since been the object of thy contempt. Know, then, that God does not disdain this unborn Child, for this Child is also God! And a single act of adoration and devotedness to His Father, which He is making in the womb of Mary, gives more glory to the Divinity than all thy pride could rob it of, even were thy

pride to increase for eternity. Henceforth, men, taught by the lessons of a God the immense power of humility, will have recourse to it as their great remedy. Instead of exalting themselves as thou did, by a mad and guilty pride, they will humble themselves with love and pleasure: the lower they humble themselves, the higher will God raise them: the poorer they own themselves, the richer will He make them. It is the glorious Virgin that tells us this in her exquisite canticle. May she be ever blessed, Mother so gentle and sweet to her children, and so terrible to thee, Lucifer! that writhes beneath her as she crushes and conquers thee.

Prose for the Time of Advent

(Composed in the eleventh century, and taken from the ancient Roman-French missals)

Ready to receive him who reigns for ever and ever,

Devoutly sing, Oh Christian people; pay thy homage to thy Creator.

The heavenly hosts, who enjoy the beauty of his countenance, are ever praising him in jubilation.

All earthly things, which are to be examined before his face, are in expectation of him.

Him so severe in judgement, So merciful in power.

Save us in thy mercy, Oh Christ, for whom thou did suffer so cruel a passion.

Raise us up to the bright stars of heaven, Oh Thou that does take away the sins of the earth.

True Saviour, descending as dew upon us, drive all dangers from us.

Purify all that is about us, make all in peace;

That here protected by thy mercy, we may ascend, hereafter, into the kingdom of heaven in gladness.

Who lives and reigns for endless ages. Amen.

Prayer from the Gallican Sacramentary

(Mass for Christmas Eve)

Oh merciful and most loving God, by whose will and bounty our Lord Jesus Christ humbled himself that He might exalt the whole human race, and came down to what was lowest that He might raise up the humble: who, being God, did become man, born of a Virgin, to the end that He might re-form in man the heavenly image that had been corrupted; grant that this Thy people may cling to Thee, and that they, whom thou hast redeemed by thy bounty, may ever please Thee by devoted service.