

Wednesday 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 3

For behold the sovereign the Lord of hosts shall take away from Jerusalem and from Juda the valiant and the strong, the whole strength of bread, and the whole strength of water: the strong man, and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, and the cunning man, and the ancient, the captain over fifty, and the honourable in countenance, and the counsellor, and the architect, and the skilful in eloquent speech. And I will give children to be their princes; and the effeminate shall rule over them. For Jerusalem is ruined and Juda is fallen, because their tongue and their devices are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his majesty. The show of their countenance has answered them, and they have proclaimed abroad their sin as Sodom, and they have not hid it. Woe to their souls, for evils are rendered to them! Say to the just man that it is well, for he shall eat the fruit of his doings. Woe to the wicked unto evil! For the reward of his hands shall be given him.

Jerusalem is tending to her destruction; therefore she is losing all power, and, with the rest, the power of understanding. She no longer knows whither she is going, and she sees not the abyss into which she is plunging. Such are all those men, who never give a thought to the coming of the sovereign Judge; they are men of whom Moses said in his canticle: ‘They are a nation without counsel and without wisdom. Oh that they would be wise and would understand, and would provide for their last end!’

The Son of God comes now in the swaddling clothes of a weak Babe, in the humility of a servant, and, to speak with the prophets, as the dew which falls softly drop by drop; but it will not always be so. This earth also, which now is the scene of our sins and our hard heartedness, will perish before the face of the angry Judge; and if we have made it the one object of our love, to what shall we then cling? ‘A sudden death which has happened in your presence,’ says St. John Chrysostom, ‘or an earthquake, or the bare threat of some dire calamity, terrifies and prostrates you: what then shall it be when the whole earth shall sink beneath your feet; when you shall see all nature in disorder; when you shall hear the sound of the last trumpet; when the sovereign Master of the universe shall appear before you in the fullness of His majesty? Perchance you have seen criminals dragged to punishment: did they not seem to die twenty times before they reached the place of execution, and before the executioner could lay his hands on them, fear had crushed out life?’

Oh! The terror of that last day! How is it that men can expose themselves to such misery, when, to avoid it, they have but to open their hearts to Him, who is now coming to them in gentlest love, asking them to give Him a place in their souls, and promising to shelter them from the wrath to come, if they will but receive Him! Oh Jesus, who can withstand Thy anger at the last day? Now Thou art our Brother, our Friend, a little Child who is to be born for us: we will therefore make covenant with Thee; so that, loving Thee now in Thy first coming, we may not fear Thee in the second. When Thou comes in that second one, bid Thy angels approach us, and say to us those thrilling words: *'It is well!'*

Hymn Of Advent

(Roman breviary, the Office of Matins)

Oh sovereign Word, begotten of the bosom of the eternal Father, yet born in the fleeting course of time, thou brings succour to the world.

Enlighten now our hearts, and inflame them with thy love, that, being detached from earthly things, they may be filled with the joys of heaven.

That when from his tribunal the Judge shall condemn the wicked to the flames, and lovingly call the good to the heaven they have won,

We may not be hurled into the dark pool of fire, but, admitted to the vision of God, may enjoy the bliss of heaven.

To the Father, and to the Son, and to thee, Oh Holy Ghost, may there ever be, as there ever has been, glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer from the Mozarabic Missal

(In the Mass of the Fourth Sunday of Advent, Illation)

It is meet and just, and available to us in all things, that we always should extol, by all possible praises, thy clemency, Oh almighty Father, who did create us in holiness and nobleness, and, when the fraud of the old serpent had seduced us, did in pure mercy deliver us from death. Thou didst foretell, in past ages, that the Son, whom Thou was to send in the flesh for us, would come on this earth and would be born of a Virgin, and by thy holy prophets did foretell the advent of his birth; and this to the end that he who had been promised, having been long expected, might give great joy to the world when he should come in the fullness of time.

Wherefore we pray and beseech Thee that thou, who did not suffer thy creature to perish, because Thou art truly compassionate and merciful, but did restore what was lost by the humble coming of thy Son, would now so protect, so keep, so heal, so defend, so free, what Thou has found and repaired and restored, that in that dread coming, whereby thy Son shall come a second time to judge those by whom and for whom he himself was judged, he may so find the creatures that he has redeemed, that he may eternally possess those whom he purchased with the price of his Blood.