



MASS OF THE SHEPHERDS

THE DAWN MASS OF CHRISTMASS DAY

INTROIT *Isaias 9. 2, 6*

Lux fulgebit hodie super nos: quia natus est nobis Dominus: et vocabitur Admirabilis, Deus, Princeps pacis, Pater futuri saeculi: cujus regni non erit finis. -- Dominus regnavit, decorem indutus est: indutus est Dominus fortitudinem, et praecinxit se. V. Gloria Patri... Lux fulgebit hodie super nos . . .

COLLECT

DA nobis, quæsumus, omnipotens Deus: ut, qui nova incarnati Verbi tui luce perfundimur; hoc in nostro resplendeat opere, quod per fidem fulget in mente. Per eundem Dominum.

EPISTLE *Titus 3. 4-7*

CARISSIME: Apparuit benignitas et humanitas Salvatoris nostri Dei: non ex operibus justitiae, quæ fecimus nos, sed secundum suam misericordiam salvos nos fecit per lavacrum regenerationis et renovationis Spiritus Sancti, quem effudit in nos abunde per Jesum Christum Salvatorem nostrum: ut justificati gratia ipsius, heredes simus secundum spem vitae aeternae: in Christo Jesu Domino nostro.

GRADUAL *Psalms 117. 26, 27, 23*

BENEDICTUS qui venit in nomine Domini: Deus Dominus, et illuxit nobis. A Domino factum est istud: et est mirabile in oculis nostris.

ALLELUIA

ALLELUIA, alleluia. V. Dominus regnavit, decorem induit: induit Dominus fortitudinem, et praecinxit se virtute. Alleluia.

A light shall shine upon us this day: for the Lord is born to us: and He shall be called Wonderful, God, the Prince of Peace, the Father of the world to come: of whose reign there shall be no end. -- (Ps.92. 1). The Lord hath reigned, He is clothed with beauty: the Lord is clothed with strength, and hath girded Himself. V.: Glory be to the Father... A light shall shine upon us...

Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that we, upon whom is poured the new light of Thy Word made flesh, may show forth in our actions that which by faith shineth in our minds. Through the same our Lord.

Dearly beloved, the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared: not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost, whom He hath poured forth upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that, being justified by His grace, we may be heirs according to hope of life everlasting: in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord: the Lord is God, and He hath shone upon us. This is the Lord's doing: and it is wonderful in our eyes.

Alleluia, alleluia. V. The Lord hath reigned, He is clothed with beauty: the Lord is clothed with strength, and hath girded Himself with power. Alleluia.

GOSPEL *St. Luke 2. 15-20*

IN illo tēmpore: Pastóres loquebántur ad invicem: Transeámus usque Bétlehem, et videámus hoc verbum quod factum est, quod Dóminus osténdit nobis. Et venérunt festinántes: et invenérunt Mariám et Joseph, et infántem pósito in præsépio. Vidéntes autem cognovérunt de verbo quod dictum erat illis de púero hoc. Et omnes, qui audiérunt, miráti sunt: et de his, quæ dicta erant a pastóribus ad ipsos. María autem conservábat ómnia verba hæc, cónferens in corde suo. Et revérsi sunt pastóres, glorificántes et laudántes Deum in Omnibus quæ audierant et viderant, sicut dictum est ad illos.

At that time the shepherds said one to another: Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us. And they came with haste: and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. And seeing they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child. And all that heard wondered: and at those things that were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

OFFERTORY *Psalm 92. 1-2*

DEUS firmávit orbem terræ, qui non commovébitur: paráta sedes tua, Deus, ex tunc; a sæculo tu es.

God hath established the world, which shall not be moved: Thy throne, O God, is prepared from of old; Thou art from everlasting.

SECRET

MÚNERA nostra, quæsumus, Dómine, nativitátis hodiernæ mystériis apta provéniant, et pacem nobis semper infúndant: ut, sicut homo génius idem refúlsit et Deus, sic nobis hæc terréna substántia cónferat, quod divinum est. Per eúmdem Dóminum.

May our offerings, we beseech Thee, O Lord, be in keeping with the mysteries of this festival of the Nativity, and ever pour down upon us peace: that even as He who was born Man shone forth also as God, so may this earthly substance bestow upon us that which is divine. Through the same our Lord.

PREFACE *Of The Most Holy Nativity*

Vere dignum et justum est, aéquum et salutáre, nos tibi semper, et ubique grátias ágere: Dómine sancte, Pater omnípotens, ætérne Deus: Quia per incarnate Verbi mystérium, nova mentis nostræ óculis lux tuæ claritátis infúlsit: ut dum visibíliter Deum cognóscimus, per hunc in invisibílium amórem rapíamur. Et ídeo cum Ángelis et Archángelis, cum Thronis et Dominatió nibus, cumque omni militia cæléstis exércitus, hymnum glóriæ tuæ cánimus, sine fine dicéntes:

It is truly meet and just, right and for our salvation, that we should at all times and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O holy Lord, Father almighty, everlasting God, for through the mystery of the Word made flesh, the new light of Thy glory hath shone upon the eyes of our mind, so that while we acknowledge God in visible form, we may through Him be drawn to the love of things invisible. And therefore with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominations, and with all the hosts of the heavenly army, we sing the hymn of Thy glory, ever more saying:

PROPER COMMUNICANTES

Communicántes, et noctem sacratíssimam celebrántes, qua beátæ Mariæ intemeráta virginitas huic mundo édidit Salvatórem: sed et memóriam venerántes, in primis ejúsdem gloriósæ semper Vírginis Mariæ, Genitrícis ejúsdem Dei et Dómini nostri Jesu Christi: sed et...

Having communion in, and keeping this most holy night, on which the spotless virginity of blessed Mary brought forth a Savior to this world; and also reverencing the memory first of the same glorious Mary, ever Virgin, Mother of the same our God and Lord Jesus Christ: as also...

COMMUNION ANTIPHON *Zach. 9. 9*

EXSÚLTA, filia Sion, lauda, filia Jerúsalem:

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Sion, shout for joy, O Daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King

ecce rex tuus venit sanctus, et salvátor mundi. *comes, holy, the Saviour of the world.*

POSTCOMMUNION COLLECT

HUJUS nos, Dómine, sacraménti semper *May this sacrament, Lord, give us always the*
nóvitas natális instáuret: *freshness of new life, for Your marvellous Birth*
singuláris humánam répultat vetustátem. Per *has defeated man's helplessness. Through the*
eúmdem Dóminum nostrum. *same our Lord.*

TODAY'S REFLECTIONS

THE EPISTLE: *To whom do we owe our salvation?* Not to ourselves, nor any good works we may have performed, but entirely to the mercy of God who from all eternity decreed our redemption, and sent His only-begotten Son into this world to accomplish it; which redemption is bestowed upon us in baptism, where we are washed from the stain of sin, and by the rich infusion of the Holy Ghost born again, heirs of eternal life.

Why, then, had God no mercy on the fallen angels? To this question St. John of Damascus replies: *"We must know here that the fall was to the angels what death is to man; for the angels there was no repentance after the fall, as for man there is no repentance after death"* (De fid. orthod. lib.2. c.4). In eternity there is no available contrition and penance, so God showed no mercy to the fallen angels. Let us learn from this, to make ourselves participators in the mercy of God, by contrition and penance while there is yet time.

THE GOSPEL: The shepherds follow at once the voice of God which calls them to the manger; they exhort one another to do so; they seek the Redeemer and happily find Him; they make Him known to others, and heartily thank God for the grace given them.

Let us follow the inspirations of God with ready obedience; let us exhort one another to virtue by our good example and edifying conversation; let us make good use of the knowledge given us by God, give it to others, and praise God for the same.

Mary kept all these words, spoken about her Son, and pondered them in her heart. Let us learn from her to prepare food for our souls by careful meditation on the divine truths that are made known to us: so that we may be preserved and strengthened in spiritual life.

The Three Masses of Chrismass

Like many liturgical practices the origin of the three Christmas Masses (midnight, dawn and during the day) is not entirely certain.

Christmas as a liturgical feast falling on Dec. 25 originated at Rome, in or around the year 330. It is very likely that the feast was first celebrated in the newly completed basilica of St. Peter.

From Rome the celebration of Christmas then slowly spread eastward and little by little was incorporated into the liturgical calendar of the principal Churches. Some of these Churches had celebrated Christ's birth on Jan. 6 and they have continued to give more importance to this date even after accepting Dec. 25.

During this period the Church at Jerusalem had established some particular customs.

Egeria, a woman who made a long pilgrimage to the Holy Land from 381 to 384, described how the Christians of Jerusalem commemorated the Christmas mystery on Jan. 6 with a midnight vigil at Bethlehem, followed by a torchlight procession to Jerusalem arriving at dawn to the Church of the Resurrection (Anastasis in Greek).

Fifty years later at Rome, Pope Sixtus III (432-440) decided to honor the proclamation of Mary's divine maternity at the Council of Ephesus (431) by building the great basilica of St. Mary Major on the Esquiline hill.

Among other elements Sixtus III built a chapel that reproduced the cave of Bethlehem. (The relics of the Crib, still found today in St. Mary Major's, were not placed in this chapel until the seventh century.) Sixtus III, probably inspired by the custom of the midnight vigil held in Jerusalem, instituted the practice of a midnight Mass in this grotto-like oratory.

In Rome the custom already existed of commemorating important feasts with two distinct offices, one held at night and the other toward dawn. It is easy to see how the simple feast initiated by Sixtus III at St. Mary Major's increased in importance and developed. The first development was that the oldest Christmas office, which was sung at St. Peter's, began to be also held at St. Mary Major's.

A further development occurred around 550. The Pope, and some members of the curia, celebrated a second Mass sometime before dawn at the Church of St. Anastasia.

At the beginning this happened because St. Anastasia's feast day also fell on Dec. 25 and had nothing to do with Christmas. Later however, probably inspired by the practice of the dawn Mass in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, and coupled with the similarity of the name Anastasia, this celebration was transformed into a second Christmas Mass.

After this almost-private Mass, the Pope would go directly to St. Peter's where a large assembly of faithful awaited the solemn dawn office of Christmas. This custom continued at least until the time of Pope Gregory VII (died 1085).

Initially the privilege of three celebrations at Christmas was reserved to the Pope. The first evidence we have of a single priest celebrating the three Masses is from the Monastery of Cluny before the year 1156.

All priests may still avail of this privilege and celebrate three Masses on Christmas Day providing they respect the proper hours. The first Mass is celebrated at Midnight (the vigil Mass of Dec. 24 does not count as the first of the three Masses), the second at dawn and the third at some time during the day.

