

DECEMBER 24, VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY

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Station at St. Mary Major.

It was only when Our Lord's nativity was celebrated with increasing solemnity that a special Mass was said on this vigil. The actual solemnity of December 25, instead of consisting of two Masses, one of the vigil and the other of the feast, with a third inserted in commemoration of St. Anastasia, ended by allowing four Masses, all of them in honor of the Christian mystery - viz., one in the evening of December 24 at the beginning of the night Office, one at midnight at the first cock-crowing, one in the early morning, and one, finally, at the hour of Terce.

Unlike the other vigils, in which the penitential character and a sense of sadness predominate, that of Christmas is full of vivacity and holy joy. This is fully in accordance with the nature of the heart of man. After so long a period of anxious and painful expectation, the sudden news of our approaching deliverance lightens the heart, while a common joy unites us and makes us forget for a moment the hard conditions of our life here below.

INTROIT Exodus 16: 6, 7

Hódie sciétis, quia véniet Dóminus, et salvábit nos: et mane vidébitis glóriam ejus. (Ps. 23: 1) Dómini est terra, et plenitúdo ejus: orbis terrárum, et univérsti qui hábitant in eo. Glória Patri et Fílio et Spíritui Sancto, sicut erat in princípío, et nunc, et semper, et in sæcula sæculórum. Amen. Hódie sciétis, quia véniet Dóminus, et salvábit nos: et mane vidébitis glóriam ejus.

COLLECT

Deus, qui nos redemptiónis nostræ ánnua exspectatióne lætíficas: præsta; ut Unigénitum tuum, quem Redemptórem læti suscipimus, veniéntem quoque júdicem secúri videámus, Dóminum nostrum Jesum Christum Fílium tuum. Qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spíritus Sancti, Deus, per ómnia sæcula sæculórum.

EPISTLE Romans 1: 1-6

Paulus, servus Jesu Christi, vocátus Apóstolus, segregátus in Evangélium Dei, quod ante promiserat per prophétas suos in Scriptúris sanctis de Fílio suo, qui factus est ei ex sémine David secúndum carnem: qui prædestinátus est Fílius Dei in virtúte secúndum spíritum sanctificatiónis ex resurrectiÓne mortuórum Jesu Christi Dómini nostri: per quem accépimus grátiam, et apostolatúm ad obediéndum fidei in ómnibus géntibus pro nómine ejus, in quibus estis et vos vocáti Jesu Christi Dómini nostri.

GRADUAL Exodus 16: 6, 7

Hódie sciétis, quia véniet Dóminus, et salvábit nos: et mane vidébitis glóriam ejus. (Ps. 79: 2, 3) Qui regis Ísraël, inténde: qui dedúcis, velut ovem, Joseph: qui sedes super Chérubim, appáre coram Ephraím, Bénjamin, et Manásse.

(The Alleluia is only said when the Vigil falls on a Sunday.)

LESSER ALLELUIA Psalms 84: 4

Allelúja, allelúja. Crastína die delébitur iniquitas terræ: et regnabit super nos Salvátor mundi. Allelúja.

GOSPEL Matthew 1: 18-21

Cum esset desponsáta mater Jesu María Joseph, ántequam convenirent, invénta est in útero habens de Spíritu Sancto. Joseph autem vir ejus, cum esset justus, et nollet eam tradúcere, vóluit occúlte dimíttre eam. Hæc autem eo cogítante, ecce Angelus Dómini appáruit in somnis ei, dicens: Joseph, fili David, noli timére accípere Mariám cónjugem tuam: quod enim in ea natum est, de Spíritu Sancto est. Páriet autem fílium, et vocábis nomen ejus Jesum: ipse enim salvum fáciat pópulum suum a peccátis eórum.

OFFERTORY Psalms 23: 7

Tollite portas, príncipes, vestras: et elevámini, portæ æternáles, et introíbit Rex glóriæ.

SECRET

Da nobis, quæsumus, omnípotens Deus: ut, sicut adoránda Fílii tui natalítia prævenimus, sic ejus múnere capiámus sempitérna gaudéntes: Qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spíritus Sancti, Deus, per ómnia sæcula sæculórum.

PREFACE OF ADVENT

Vere dignum et justum est, æquum et salutáre, nos tibi semper, et ubique grátias ágere: Dómine sancte, Pater omnípotens, ætérne Deus: per Christum Dóminum nostrum. Quem pérdito hómínem géneri Salvatórem miséricors et fidélis promisiísti: cujus vérítas instrúeret íncios, sáncctitas justificáret ímpios, virtus adjuváret infirmos. Dum ergo prope est ut iníat quem missúrus es, et dies affúlget liberatiónis nostræ, in hac promissiónum tuárum fide, piis gáudiis exsultámus. Et ideo cum Ángelis et Archángelis, cum Thronis et Dominatióibus, cumque omni militia cæléstis exércitus, hymnum glóriæ tuæ cánimus, sine fine dicéntes:

COMMUNION Isaiah 40: 5

Revelábitur glória Dómini: et vidébit omnis caro salutáre Dei nostri.

POSTCOMMUNION

Da nobis, quæsumus, Dómine, unigéniti Fílii tui recensíta nativítate respiráre; cujus cælésti mystério páscimur et potámur. Per eúndem Dóminum nostrum Jesum Christum, Fílium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spíritus Sancti, Deus, per ómnia sæcula sæculórum.

This day you shall know that the Lord will come, and save us: and in the morning you shall see His glory. (Ps. 23: 1) The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world, and all they that dwell therein. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. This day you shall know that the Lord will come, and save us: and in the morning you shall see His glory.

O God, who makest us glad with the yearly expectation of our redemption, grant that we who now joyfully receive Thine only-begotten Son as our Redeemer, may also without fear behold Him coming as our Judge, the same our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son: Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, which He had promised before by His prophets in the holy Scriptures concerning His Son, who was made to Him of the seed of David according to the flesh:

who was predestinated the Son of God in power according to the spirit of sanctification by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead: by whom we have received grace, and apostleship for obedience to the faith in all nations for His name, among whom are you also the called of Jesus Christ our Lord.

This day you shall know that the Lord will come and save us: and in the morning you shall see His glory. (Ps. 79: 2, 3) Give ear, O Thou that rulest Israel: Thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep, Thou that sittest upon the Cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasses.

(The Alleluia is only said when the Vigil falls on a Sunday.)

Alleluia, alleluia. Tomorrow shall the iniquity of the earth be abolished: and the Savior of the world shall reign over us. Alleluia.

Then Mary the Mother of Jesus was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.

Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of glory shall enter in.

Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that as we anticipate the adorable birthday of Thy Son, so may we joyfully receive His eternal gifts: Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

It is truly meet and just, right and for our salvation, that we should at all times and places give thanks unto Thee, O holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God, through Christ our Lord; for in Thy mercy and fidelity Thou hast promised Him as Savior to the lost race of men, to instruct the ignorant with His truth, justify the wicked with His holiness, and help the weak by His power. Now that the time draweth nigh that He Whom Thou art to send should come, and the day of our liberation should dawn, with faith in Thy promises, we rejoice with holy exultation. And therefore with the Angels and Archangels, with the Thrones and Dominations, and with all the hosts of the heavenly army, we sing a hymn of Thy glory, evermore saying:

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed: and all flesh shall see the salvation of our God.

Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that the celebration of the birth of Thine only-begotten Son may give us fresh life; whose heavenly mystery is our food and drink. Through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.