

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

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Collect at St. Vitalis "*ad duas domos.*" Station at St. Susanna.

St. Vitalis was dedicated by Innocent I (412-17) to the martyrs Vitalis, Gervase, and Protase. The Basilica of St. Susanna is the ancient *titulus Gaii*, called also after the saints Gabinius and Susanna, the brother and the niece of the Pontiff who performed the dedication; it rises on the ruins of an ancient Roman building (the two houses, *ad duas domos*) and was a parish church in the time of Pope Symmachus (498-514).

The story of Susanna, so familiar to the early Church, and so often reproduced in the paintings of the Catacombs, should fill our souls with loving confidence. Susanna prefers to fall a victim to the vengeance of her accusers rather than sin against God. She places all her trust in the Lord, and her prayer becomes her salvation.

The holy Gospel describing the scene where the woman taken in adultery is brought before Christ, is a great consolation to sinners who can never hope to regain the esteem of their fellow men but who hear the voice of God within them saying: "Neither will I condemn thee."

INTROIT Psalms 5: 2-3

Verba mea áuribus pèrcipe, Dómine, intéllége clamórem meum: inténde voci oratiónis meæ, Rex meus et Deus meus. (Ps. 5: 4) Quóniam ad te orábo, Dómine: mane exáudies vocem meam. Glória Patri et Filio et Spirítui Sancto, sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in sæcula sæculórum. Amen. Verba mea áuribus pèrcipe, Dómine, intéllége clamórem meum: inténde voci oratiónis meæ, Rex meus et Deus meus.

COLLECT

Præsta, quæsumus, omnipotens Deus: ut, qui se, affligéndo carnem, ab alimentis abstinent; sectándo justítiam, a culpa jejúnent. Per Dóminum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spirítus Sancti, Deus, per ómnia sæcula sæculórum.

LESSON Daniel

13: 1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62

In diébus illis: Erat vir hábitans in Babylóne, et nomen ejus Jóakim: et accépit uxorem nómine Susánnam, filiam Helciæ, pulchram nimis, et tíméntem Deum: paréntes enim illius, cum essent justí, erudiérunt filiam suam secúndum legem Móysi. Erat autem Jóakim dives valde, et erat ei pomárium vicínium dómui suæ: et ad ipsum confluébant Judæi, eo quod esset honorabilior ómnium. Et constituti sunt de pópulo duo senes júdices in illo anno: de quibus locútus est Dóminus: Quia egréssa est iniquitas de Babylóne a senióribus júdicibus, qui videbántur régere pópulum. Isti frequentábant domum Jóakim, et veniébant ad eos omnes, qui habébant júdicia. Cum autem pópulus revertísset per meridiem, ingrediebátur Susánna, et deambulábant in pomário viri sui. Et videbant eam senes cotídie ingrediéntem et deambulántem: et extersérunt in concupiscéntiam ejus: eteventérunt sensum suum, et declinavérunt óculos suos, ut non vidérant cælum, neque recordaréntur júdiciorum justórum. Factum est autem, cum observárent diem aptum, ingressa est aliquándo sicut heri et núdius tértius, cum duábus solis puéllis, voluítque lavári in pomário: æstus quippe erat, et non erat ibi quisquam, præter duos senes absconditos et contemplantés eam. Dixit ergo puéllis: Afférte mihi óleum et smígmata, et óstia pomárii cláudite, ut laver. Cum autem egréssæ essent puéllæ, surrexérunt duo senes, et accurrérunt ad eam, et dixérunt: Ecce, óstia pomárii clausa sunt, et nemo nos videt, et nos in concupiscéntia tui sumus: quam ob rem accusatúre nobis, et commiscére nobiscum. Quod si nolúeris, dicémus contra te testimónium, quod fúerit tecum júvenis, et ob hanc causam emiseris puéllas a te. Ingémuit Susánna, et ait: Angústisæ sunt mihi úndique: si enim hoc égero, mors mihi est: si autem non egero, non effúgiam manus vestras. Sed mélius est mihi absque ópere incidere in manus vestras, quam peccáre in conspéctu Dómini. Et exclamávit voce magna Susánna: exclamavérunt autem et senes advérsum eam. Et cucúrrit ergo ad óstia pomárii, et apéruit. Cum unus audíssent clamórem fámuli domus in pomário, irruérunt per posticum, ut vidérant, quidnam esset. Postquam autem senes locúti sunt, erubuérunt servi veheménter: quia numquam dictus fúerat sermo hujuscémodi de Susánna. Et facta est dies crástina. Cumque venísset pópulus ad Jóakim virum ejus, venérunt et duo senióres, pleni iníqua cogitatíone advérsum Susánnam, ut interficerent eam. Et dixérunt coram pópulo: Míttite ad Susánnam filiam Helciæ, uxórem Jóakim. Et statim misérunt. Et venit cum paréntibus et filiis et univérsis cognátis suis. Fiébant ígitur sui, et omnes qui nóverant eam.

Consurgéntes autem duo senióres in médio pópuli, posuérunt manus suas super caput ejus. Quæ flens suspéxit ad cæum: erat enim cor ejus fidúciam habens in Dómino. Et dixérunt senióres: Cum deambularémus in pomário soli, ingrèssa est hæc cum duábus puéllis: et clausit óstia pomárii, et dimísit a se puéllas. Venítque ad eam adoléscentis, qui erat absconditus, et concúbuit cum ea. Porro nos, cum essémus in ángulo pomárii, vidéntes iniquitatem, cucúrrimus ad eos, et vidimus eos pariter commiscéri. Et illum quidem non quívimus comprehéndere, quia fórtior nobis erat, et apértis óstiis exsilívit: hanc autem cum apprehendissémus, interrogávimus, quisnam esset adoléscentis, et nóluit indicáre nobis: hujus rei testes sumus. Crédidit eis multítudo quasi sénibus et júdicibus pópuli, et condemnáverunt eam ad mortem. Exclamávit autem voce magna Susánna, et dixit: Deus ætérne, qui abscondítorum es cognitor. qui nósti ómnia, ántequam fiant, tu scis, quóniam falsum testimónium tulérunt contra me: et ecce, mórior, cum nihil horum fécerim, quæ isti malitióse composuérunt advérsum me. Exaudivit autem Dóminus vocem ejus. Cumque ducerétur ad mortem, suscitávit Dóminus spíritum sanctum pueri junióris, cujus nomen Dániel. Et exclamávit voce magna: Mundus ego sum a sánguine hujus. Et convérsum omnis pópulus ad eum, dixit: Quis est iste sermo, quem tu locútus es? Qui cum staret in médio eórum, ait: Sic fáti, filii Israël, non júdicantes, neque quod verum est cognoscéntes, condemnástis filiam Israël? Revertímmini ad júdiciam, quæ falsam testimónium locúti sunt advérsum eam. Reversus est ergo pópulus cum festinatíone. Et dixit ad eos Dániel: Separáte illos ab ínvicem procul, et dijudicábo eos. Cum ergo divisi essent alter ab áltero, invocávit diem de malis, et dixit ad eum: Invetérate úterum eorum, nunc venérunt peccáta tua, quæ operabáris prius: júdicans júdicia in jústa, innoxios, dicéntes Dómino: Innoxéntem et justum non interficies. Nunc ergo, si vidísti eam, dic, sub qua arbóre vidéris eos colloqúentes sibi. Qui ait: Sub schino. Dixit autem Dániel: Recte mentítus es in caput tuum. Ecce enim, Ángelus Dei, accépta senténtia ab eo, scindet te médium. Et, amóto eo, jussit veníre álium, et dixit ei: Semen Chánaan, et non Juda, spécies decépit te, et concupiscéntia subvertit cor tuum: sic faciebátis filiábus Israël, et illæ tíméntes loquebántur vobis: sed filia luda non sustinuit iniquitatem vestram. Nunc ergo dic mihi, sub qua arbóre comprehénderis eos loquéntes sibi. Qui ait: Sub prino. Dixit autem ei Dániel: Recte mentítus es et tu in caput tuum: manet enim Ángelus Dómini, gládium habens, ut secet te médium, et interficiat vos. Exclamávit itaque omnis coetus voce magna, et benedixérunt Deum, qui salvat sperántes in se. Et consurrexérunt advérsum duos senióres - convíserat enim eos Dániel ex ore suo - falsum dixisse testimónium, - fecerúntque eis, sicut male égerant advérsum primum: et interfecérunt eos, et salvátus est sanguis innóxius in die illa.

GRADUAL Psalms 22: 4

Sí ámbulem in médio umbræ mortis, non tímébo mala: quóniam tu mecum es, Dómine. Virga tua et báculus tuus, ipsa me consoláta sunt.

GOSPEL John 8: 1-11

In illo Olivét: Perréxit Jesus in montem Olivét: et dilúculo íterum venit in templum, et omnis pópulus venit ad eum, et sedens docébat eos. Addúcunt autem scribæ et pharisæi mulièrem in adulterío deprehénsam: et statuérent eam in médio, et dixérunt ei: Magister, hæc mulier modo deprehénsa est in adulterío. In lege autem Moyses mandávit nobis hujúsmodi lapidáre. Tu ergo quid dicis? Hoc autem dicebant tentántes eum, ut possent accusáre eam. Jesus utem inclinans se deórsum, dígitó scribébat in terra. Cum ergo perseverárent interrogántes eum, eréxit se, et dixit eis: Qui sine peccáto est vestrum, primus in illam lápidem mittat. Et íterum se inclinans, scribébat in terra. Audiéntes autem unus post unum exibánt, inciéntes a senióribus: et remánsit solus Jesus, et mulier in médio stans. Erigens autem se Jesus, dixit ei: Mulier, ubi sunt, qui te accusábant? Quæ dixit: Nemo, Dómine. Dixit autem Jesus: Nec ego te condemnábo. Vade, et iam ámplius noli peccáre.

OFFERTORY Psalms 118: 133

Gressus meos diríge secúndum elóquium tuum: ut non dominétur mei omnis injústítia, Dómine.

SECRET

Concéde, quæsumus, omnipotens Deus: ut hujus sacrificii munus oblátum, fragilitatém nostram ab omni malo purget semper et múniat. Per Dóminum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spíritus Sancti, Deus, per ómnia sæcula sæculórum.

PREFACE OF LENT

Vere dignum et justum est, æquum et salutáre, nos tibi semper et ubique grátias ágere: Dómine sancte, Pater omnipotens, ætérne Deus: Qui corporáli jejúnio vítia cómprimis, mentem élevas, virtútem largiris et præmia: per Christum Dóminum nostrum. Per quem majestátem tuam laudant Ángeli, adórant Dominatíones, tíméntes potestátes. Cæli cælorúmque Virtutes ac beatáa Séraphim sórcia exsultatíone concélebrant. Cum quibus et nostras voces ut admítta júbeas, deprecámur, súplici confessióne dicéntes:

COMMUNION John 8: 10-11

Nemo te condemnávit, mulier? Nemo, Dómine. Nec ego te condemnábo: iam ámplius noli peccáre.

POSTCOMMUNION

Quæsumus, omnipotens Deus: ut inter ejus membra numerémur, cuius cópori communicámus et sánguini: Qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spíritus Sancti, Deus, per ómnia sæcula sæculórum.

PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE

Humiliáte cápita vestra Deo. Prætéram, Dómine, fidélibus tuis déxteram cæléstis auxilií: ut te toto corde perquirant; et, quæ digne póstulant, cónsequi mereántur. Per Dóminum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spíritus Sancti, Deus, per ómnia sæcula sæculórum.

Give ear, O Lord, to my words, understand my cry: harken to the voice of my prayer, O my King and my God. (Ps. 5: 4) For to Thee will I pray: O Lord, in the morning Thou shalt hear my voice. 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. Give ear, O Lord, to my words, understand my cry: harken to the voice of my prayer, O my King and my God.

Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God: that we who, mortifying ourselves, abstain from nourishment, may, following justice, fast from sin. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

In those days, in Babylon there lived a man named Joakim, who married a very beautiful and God-fearing woman, Susanna, the daughter of Helcia; her pious parents had trained their daughter according to the Law of Moses. Joakim was very rich; he had a garden near his house, and the Jews had recourse to him often because he was the most respected of them all. That year, two elders of the people were appointed judges, of whom the Lord said, Wickedness had come out of Babylon: from the elders who were to govern the people as judges. These men, to whom all brought their cases, frequented the house of Joakim. When the people left at noon, Susanna used to enter her husband's garden for a walk. When the old man saw her enter every day for her walk, they began to lust for her. They suppressed their consciences; they would not allow their eyes to look to heaven, and did not keep in mind just judgments. One day, while they were waiting for the right moment, she entered the garden as usual, with two maids only. She decided to bathe, for the weather was warm. Nobody else was there except the two elders, who had hidden themselves and were watching her. Bring me oil and soap, she said to the maids, and shut the garden doors while I bathe. As soon as the maids had left, the two old men got up and hurried to her. Look, they said, the garden doors are shut, and no one can see you; give in to our desire, and lie with us. If you refuse, we will testify against you that you dismissed your maids because a young man was here with you. I am completely trapped, Susanna groaned. If I yield, it will be my death; if I refuse, I cannot escape your power. Yet it is better for me to fall into your power without guilt than to sin before the Lord. Then Susanna shrieked, and the old men also shouted at her, as one of them ran to open the garden doors. When the people in the house heard the cries from the garden, they rushed in by the side gate to see what had happened to her. At the accusations by the old men, the servants felt very much ashamed, for never had any such thing been said about Susanna. When the people came to her husband Joakim the next day, the two wicked elders also came, fully determined to put Susanna to death. Before all the people they ordered: Send for Susanna, the daughter of Helcia, the wife of Joakim. When she was sent for, she came with her parents, children and all her relatives. All her relatives and the onlookers were weeping. In the midst of the people the two elders rose up and laid their hands on her head. Through her tears she looked up to heaven, for she trusted in the Lord wholeheartedly. The elders made this accusation: As we were walking in the garden alone, this woman entered with two girls and shut the doors of the garden, dismissing the girls. A young man, who was hidden there, came and lay with her. When we, in a corner of the garden, saw this crime, we ran toward them. We saw them lying together, but the man we could not hold, because he was stronger than we; he opened the doors and ran off. Then we seized this one and asked who the young man was, but she refused to tell us. We testify to this. The assembly believed them, since they were elders and judges of the people, and they condemned her to death. But Susanna cried aloud: O eternal God,

You know what is hidden and are aware of all things before they come to be: You know that they have testified falsely against me. Here I am about to die, though I have done none of the things with which these wicked men have charged me. The Lord heard her prayer. As she was being led to execution, God stirred up the holy spirit of a young boy named Daniel, and he cried aloud: I will have no part in the death of this woman. All the people turned and asked him, What is this you are saying? He stood in their midst and continued, Are you such fools, O Israelites! to condemn a woman of Israel without examination and without clear evidence? Return to court, for they have testified falsely against her. Then all the people returned in haste. And Daniel said to them: Separate these two from one another that I may examine them. After they were separated one from the other, he called one of them and said: How you have your past sins come to term: passing unjust sentences, condemning the innocent, and freeing the guilty, although the Lord said, 'The innocent and the just you shall not put to death.' Now, then, if you were a witness, tell me under what tree you saw them together. Under a terec tree. And Daniel said; Well have you lied against your own head, for the Angel of God, having received the sentence from Him shall split you in two. Putting him to one side, he ordered the other one to be brought. And Daniel said to him: O offspring of Chanaan, not of Juda, beauty has seduced you, lust has subverted your conscience. This is how you acted with the daughters of Israel, and in their fear they yielded to you; but a daughter of Juda did not tolerate your wickedness. Now, then, tell me under what tree you surprised them together. Under an oak, he said. Your fine lie has cost you also your head, said Daniel; for the Angel of god waits with a sword to cut you in two so as to make an end of you both. The whole assembly cried aloud, blessing God, Who saves those that hope in Him. They rose up against the two elders, for by their own words Daniel had convicted them of perjury. They inflicted on them the penalty they had plotted to impose on their neighbor: they put them to death. Thus was innocent blood spared that day.

If I should walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me, O Lord. Thy rod and Thy staff they have comforted me.

At that time, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. And at daybreak He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and sitting down He began to teach them. Now the Scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and setting her in the midst, said to Him, Master, this woman has just now been caught in adultery. And in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such persons. What, therefore, do You say? Now they were saying this to test Him, in order that they might be able to accuse Him. But Jesus, stooping down, began to write with His finger on the ground. But when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself and said to them, Let him who is without sin among you be the first to cast a stone at her. And again stooping down, He began to write on the ground. But hearing this, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest. And Jesus remained alone, with the woman standing in the midst. And Jesus, raising Himself, said to her, Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? She said, No one, Lord. Then Jesus said, Neither will I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on sin no more.

Direct my footsteps according to Thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me, O Lord.

Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that the gift of this sacrifice, offered to Thee, may cleanse and ever defend our weakness from all evil. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

It is truly fitting and just, proper and beneficial, that we should always and everywhere, give thanks unto Thee, holy Lord, Father almighty, everlasting God. Who by this bodily fast, dost curb our vices, dost lift up our minds and bestow on us strength and rewards; through Christ our Lord. Through Whom the Angels praise Thy majesty, the Dominations adore, the Powers tremble: the heavens and the hosts of heaven, and the blessed Seraphim, together celebrate in exultation. With whom, we pray Thee, command that our voices of supplication also be admitted in confessing Thee saying:

Has no man condemned you, woman? No man, Lord: Neither will I condemn you: now sin no more.

We beseech Thee, almighty God, that we may be numbered among the members of Him, Whose Body and Blood we receive in communion. Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

Bow your heads to God. Stetch forth to Thy faithful, O Lord, the right hand of Thy heavenly aid, that they may seek Thee with all their hearts, and may be worthy to obtain what they ask. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.