

The Liturgy of the Ember Day fasts possessed originally a distinctly festive quality, and was partly a festival of thanksgiving for the harvesting of the fruits of the season. These rustic feasts originated at Rome. The liturgy of this week has kept to a great extent unchanged its early festive character, which recalls so vividly the rural feasts of ancient Rome at the close of the vintage. The idea of a special preparation for the solemn Ordinations represents a later addition, which, however, dates from the time of Gelasius I.

The station on Ember Wednesday is, as a rule, at St. Mary Major, and the three Lessons in the Mass are a survival of the ancient Roman liturgical use, which recalls those very early times when, to the two Lessons from the Law and the Prophets, customary in the synagogues of the Dispersion, the Apostles added a third lesson taken from the Gospels. The passage from the Gospel of St. Mark (9:16-28) teaches that humble prayer and fasting, spiritualize our nature, which is thus raised to a supernatural state, and render it invulnerable to the fatal blows of Satan.

INTROIT Psalms 80: 2-5

Exsultate Deo, adjutori nostro: jubilate Deo cithara: sumite psalmum cundum tuba, quia praecceptum in Israel est, et iudicium Deo Jacob. (Ps. 80: 6)

Testimonium in Joseph posuit illud, cum exiret de terra Aegypti: linguam, quam non noverat, audivit. Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto, sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen. Exsultate Deo, adjutori nostro: jubilate Deo Jacob: sumite psalmum cundum cum cithara: canite in initio mensis tuba, quia praecceptum in Israel est, et iudicium Deo Jacob.

Flectamus genua.

R. Levate.

COLLECT

Misericordiae tuae remedii, quaesumus, Domine, fragilitas nostra subsistat: ut, quae sua conditione atterritur, tua demencia reparetur. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti, Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum.

LESSON Amos 9: 13-15

Haec dicit Dominus Deus: Ecce, dies veniunt: et comprehendet arator messorem, et calcator uvae mittentem semen: et stillabunt montes dulcedinem, et omnes colles culti erunt. Et convertam captivitatem populi mei Israel: et aedificabunt civitates desertas et inhabitabunt: et plantabunt vineas et bibent vinum eorum: et facient hortos et comedent fructus eorum. Et plantabo eos super humum suam: et non evellam eos ultra de terra sua, quam dedi eis: dicit Dominus, Deus tuus.

GRADUAL Psalms 112: 5-7

Quis sicut Dominus, Deus noster, qui in altis habitat, et humilia respicit in caelo et in terra? Suscitans a terra inopem et de stercore erigens pauperem.

Dominus vobiscum

R. Et cum spiritu tuo.

COLLECT

Præsta, quaesumus, Domine, familiae tuae supplicanti: ut, dum a cibis corporalibus se abstinet, a vitiis quoque mente jeiunet. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum.

(Commemoration of St. Thomas of Villanova)

COLLECT

Deus, qui beatum Thomam Pontificem insignis in pauperes misericordiae virtute decorasti: quaesumus; ut, ejus intercessione, in omnes, qui te deprecantur, divitias misericordiae tuae benignus effundas. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum.

LESSON 2 Esdras 8: 1-10

In diebus illis: Congregatus est omnis populus quasi vir unus ad plateam, quae est ante portam aquarum: et dixerunt Esdras scribae, ut afferret librum legis Moysi, quam praecerat Dominus Israel. Attulit ergo Esdras sacerdos legem coram multitudinem virorum et mulierum, cunctisque qui poterant intelligere, in die prima mensis septimi. Et legit in eo aperte in platea, quae erat ante portam aquarum, de mane usque ad mediam diem, in conspectu virorum et mulierum et sapientium: et aures omnis populi erant erectae ad librum. Stetit autem Esdras scriba super gradum ligneum, quem fecerat ad loquendum. Et aperuit librum coram omni populo: super univsum quippe populum eminabat: et cum aperuisset eum, stetit omnis populus. Et benedixit Esdras Domino, Deo magno: et respondit omnis populus: Amen, Amen: elevans manus suas: et incurvati sunt et adoraverunt Deum proni in terram. Porro levitae silentium faciebant in populo ad audiendam legem: populus autem stabat in gradu suo. Et legerunt in libro legis Dei distincte et aperte ad intellegendum: et intellexerunt, cum legeretur. Dixit autem Nehemias, et Esdras sacerdos et scriba, et levitae interpretantes univsum populo: Dies sanctificatus est Domino, Deo nostro, nolite lugere et nolite flere. Et dixit eis: Ite, comedite pinguis et bibite mulsum, et mittite partes his, qui non praeparaverunt sibi: quia sanctus dies Domini est, et nolite contristari: gaudium etenim Domini est fortitudo nostra.

GRADUAL Psalms 32: 12, 6

Beata gens, cujus est Dominus Deus eorum: populus, quem eligit Dominus in hereditatem sibi. Verbo Domini caeli firmati sunt: et spiritu oris ejus omnis virtus eorum.

GOSPEL Mark 9: 16-28

In illo tempore: Respondens unus de turba, dixit ad Jesum: Magister, attuli filium meum ad te, habentem spiritum mutum: qui, ubicumque eum apprehenderit, allidit illum, et spumat et stridet dentibus, et aëscit: et dixi discipulis tuis, ut eicerent illum, et non potuerunt. Qui respondens eis, dixit: O generatio incredula, quamdiu apud vos ero? quamdiu vos patiar? Afferte illum ad me. Et attulerunt eum. Et cum vidisset eum, stetit in spiritu immundo, dicens illi: Surde et mute spiritus, ego praecipio tibi, exi ab eum: et amplius ne intras in eum. Et exclamans et multum discerpens eum, exiit ab eo, et factus est sicut mortuus, ita ut multi dicerent: Quia mortuus est. Jesus autem tenens manum ejus, elevavit eum, et surrexit. Et cum introisset in domum, discipuli es secreto interrogabant eum: Quare nos non potuimus eicere eum? Et dixit illis: Hoc genus in nullo potest exire nisi in oratione et jejunio.

OFFERTORY Psalms 118: 47,48

Meditabor in mandatis tuis, quae dilexi valde: et levabo manus meas ad mandata tua, quae dilexi.

SECRET

Haec hostia, Domine, quaesumus, emittetis in caelestia: et ad sacrificium celebraandum, et additorum tibi corpora mentesque sanctificet. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti, Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum.

(Commemoration of St. Thomas of Villanova)

Sancti Thomae Confessoris tui atque Pontificis, quaesumus, Domine, annua sollemnitas pietatis tuae nos reddat acceptos: ut, per haec pia placationis officia, et illum beata retributio comitetur, et nobis gratiae tuae dona conciliet. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti, Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum.

COMMUNION 2 Esdras 8: 10

Comedite pinguis et bibite mulsum, et mittite partes his, qui non praeparaverunt sibi: sanctus enim dies Domini est, nolite contristari: gaudium etenim Domini est fortitudo nostra.

POSTCOMMUNION

Sumentes, Domine, dona caelestia, suppliciter deprecamur: ut, quae sedula servitute, donante te, gerimus, dignis sennis tuo munere capiamus. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti, Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum.

(Commemoration of St. Thomas of Villanova)

Deus, fidelium remunerator animarum: praesta; ut beati Thomae Confessoris tui atque Pontificis, cujus venerandam celebramus festivitatem, precibus intercedentium consequamur. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum.

Rejoice to God our helper: sing aloud to the God of Jacob: take a pleasant psalm with the harp; blow the trumpet in the beginning of the month, for it is a commandment in Israel, and a judgment to the God of Jacob. (Ps. 80: 6) He ordained it for a testimony in Joseph, when he came out of Egypt: he heard a tongue which he knew not. 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. Rejoice to God our helper: sing aloud to the God of Jacob: take a pleasant psalm with the harp; blow the trumpet in the beginning of the month, for it is a commandment in Israel, and a judgment to the God of Jacob.

Let us kneel.

R. Arise.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, that our weakness may be upheld by Thy healing mercy, so that what of itself is falling into ruin may be restored by Thy clemency. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

Thus saith the Lord God: Behold the days come, when the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seeds, and the mountains shall drop sweetness, and every hill shall be tilled. And I will bring back the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall build the abandoned cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine of them; and shall make gardens, and eat the fruits of them: and I will plant them upon their own land: and I will no more pluck them out of the their land which I have given them; saith the Lord thy God.

Who is as the Lord our God, Who dwelleth on high, and looketh down on the low thing in heaven and in earth? Raised up the needy from the earth, and lifting up the poor out of the dunghill.

The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to Thy suppliant household, that while they abstain from bodily food, they may likewise refrain from sin in their minds. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

O God, Who didst adorn blessed Thomas, Thy bishop, with the virtue of a consuming charity for the poor, we beseech Thee that, through his intercession, Thou graciously pour forth the riches of Thy mercy upon all who pray to Thee. 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 all the people were gathered together as one man, to the street which is before the water gate, and they spoke to Esdras the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. Then Esdras the priest brought the law before the multitude of men and women, and all those that could understand, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read it plainly in the street that was before the water gate, from the morning until mid-day, before the men and women, and all those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book. And Esdras the scribe stood upon a step of wood, which he made to speak upon. And he opened the book before all the people, for he was above all the people; and when he had opened it, all the people stood. And Esdras blessed the Lord the great God, and all the people answered: Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands: and they bowed down, and adored God, with their faces to the ground. Now the Levites made silence among the people to hear the law; and the people stood in their place: and they read in the book of the law of God distinctly and plainly to be understood; and they understood when it was read. And Nehemias, and Esdras the priest and scribe, and the levites who interpreted to all the people said: This is a holy day to the Lord our God; do not mourn nor weep. And he said to them: Go eat fat meats and drink sweet wines, and send portions to them that have not prepared for themselves; because it is the holy day of the Lord, and be not sad, for the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord: the people whom the Lord hath chosen for His inheritance. By the word of the Lord the heavens were established: and all the power of them by the spirit of His mouth.

At the time, one of the multitude answering said to Jesus: Master, I have brought my son to thee, having a dumb spirit. Who, wheresoever he taketh him, dasheth him, and he foameth, and gnasheth with the teeth, and pineth away; and I spoke to thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not. Who answering them, said: O incredulous generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him. And when he had seen him, immediately the spirit troubled him; and being thrown down upon the ground, he rolled about foaming. And he asked his father: How long time is it since this hath happened unto him? But he said: From his infancy: And oftentimes hath he cast him into the fire and into waters to destroy him. But if thou canst do any thing, help us, having compassion on us. And Jesus said to him: If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And immediately the father of the boy crying out, with tears said: I do believe, Lord: help my unbelieve. And when Jesus saw the multitude running together, he threatened the unclean spirit, saying to him: Deaf and dumb spirit, I command thee, go out of him; and enter not any more into him. And crying out, and greatly hearing him, he went out of him, and he became as dead, so that many said: He is dead. But Jesus taking him by the hand, lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples secretly asked him: Why could not we cast him out? And he said to them: This kind can go out by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

I will meditate on Thy commandments, which I will love exceedingly and lift up my hands to Thy commandments, which I have loved.

May this sacrifice, we beseech Thee, O Lord, cleanse our sins away, and sanctify the bodies and minds of them that serve Thee unto celebrating the sacrifice. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

May the annual festival of blessed Thomas, Thy Confessor and Bishop, we beseech Thee, O Lord, render us pleasing to Your loving kindness, so that this service of sacred propitiation may be a blessed recompense for him and secure for us the gifts of Thy grace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

Eat fat meats, and drink sweet wine, and send portions to them that have not prepared for themselves; because it is the holy day of the Lord; for the joy of the Lord is our strength.

As we receive Thy heavenly gift, O Lord, we humbly pray: that what of Thy bounty we dutifully hold, of Thy bounty too may we worthily keep. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

O God, Who rewards faithful souls, grant that, through the prayers of blessed Thomas, Thy Confessor and Bishop, whose hallowed feast we are keeping, we may obtain pardon for our sins. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.