



*Laetentur caeli, et exultet terra ante
faciem Domini, quoniam venit. (PS. 95)*

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THE BREVIARY LESSONS FOR CHRISTMAS (Dominican Rite)

Lesson i.

Isaias IX, 1-6



At the first time the land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthali was lightly touched: and at the last the way of the sea beyond the Jordan of the Galilee of the Gentiles was heavily loaded. The people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light: to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and hast not increased the joy. They shall rejoice before Thee, as they that rejoice in the harvest, as conquerors rejoice after taking a prey, when they divide the spoils. For the yoke of their burden, and the rod of their shoulder, and the sceptre of their oppressor Thou hast overcome, as in the day of Madian. For every violent taking of spoils, with tumult, and garment mingled with blood, shall be burnt, and be fuel for the fire. For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace. Thus saith the Lord God: Be converted unto Me, and you shall be saved.

Responsory. Today the King of Heaven deigned to be born to us of the Virgin, that He might restore lost man to the heavenly kingdom. The host of Angels rejoices. * Because eternal salvation hath appeared to the human race. *Versé.* Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. * Because eternal salvation hath appeared to the human race.

Lesson ii.

Isaias XL, 1-8

Be comforted, be comforted, My people, saith your God. Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and call to her: for her evil is come to

an end, her iniquity is forgiven: she hath received of the hand of the Lord double for all her sins. The voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the wilderness the paths of our God, for every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough ways plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh together shall see that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. The voice of one, saying: Cry. And I said: What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered and the flower is fallen, because the spirit of the Lord hath blown upon it. Indeed the people is grass: the grass is withered and the flower is fallen: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. . . . Thus saith the Lord God: Be converted unto Me, and you shall be saved.

Responsory. Today true peace hath come down to us from heaven: * Today throughout the whole world the heavens have dropped honey.

Verse. Today there hath shone upon us the day of the new redemption, of the ancient reparation, of the eternal happiness. * Today throughout the whole world the heavens have dropped honey.

Lesson iii.

Isaias LII, 1-6

Arise, arise, put on thy strength, O Sion, put on the garments of thy glory, O Jerusalem, the city of the Holy One: for henceforth the uncircumcised, and the unclean shall no more pass through thee. Shake thyself from the dust, arise, sit up, O Jerusalem: loose the bonds from off thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion. For thus saith the Lord God: You were sold gratis, and you shall be redeemed without money. For thus saith the Lord God: My people went down into Egypt at the beginning to sojourn there: and the Assyrian hath oppressed them without any cause at all. And now what have I here, saith the Lord: for My people is taken away gratis. They that rule over them treat them unjustly, saith the Lord, and My Name is continually blasphemed all the day long. Therefore My people shall know My Name in that day: for I Myself that spoke, behold I am here. . . . Thus saith the Lord God: Be converted unto Me, and you shall be saved.

Responsory. The true God born of the Father hath come down from Heaven: He hath entered the womb of the Virgin, that He might appear visible to us, clothed with the human flesh brought forth by our first-parent, and came forth by the closed gate, God and man. * Light and life, the Creator of the world. *Verse.* The Lord as a bridegroom coming out of his bride-chamber. * Light and life, the

Creator of the world.—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. * Light and life, the Creator of the world.

Lesson iv.

Sermon of St. Leo, Pope

Today, dearly beloved, was our Saviour born: let us rejoice. For it is not right that sadness should find place where is kept the birthday of Life. No one is shut out from sharing in this gladness: all have one common cause of joy. Let the saint exult, for he draws near to the palm; let the sinner rejoice, for he is invited to forgiveness; let the Gentile take heart, for he is called unto life. For the Word of God, God the Son of God, to free man from eternal death, was made man. And by such an alliance did He join the two natures that glorification did not destroy the inferior nature, nor did assumption lessen the superior nature.

Responsory. Whom have ye seen, O shepherds? Say, tell us who it is hast appeared on earth? * We have seen the Child, and the choirs of Angels praising the Lord. *Verse.* Say, what have ye seen, and tell us of the birth of Christ. * We have seen the Child, and the choirs of Angels praising the Lord.

Lesson v.

Sermon of St. Leo, Pope

Preserving, then, the property of each substance, and joining them in one person, lowliness is assumed by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity. So that because it was fitting for our remedies, the one and same Mediator of God and men could die from the one and rise again from the other. For unless He was true God, He could not offer the remedy; and unless He was true man, He could not show the example. At the birth of the Lord there is sung by the rejoicing Angels: Glory be to God in the highest. Wherefore, in this wondrous work of love, how much should the lowliness of man rejoice, when the sublimity of the Angels so rejoices!

Responsory. O great mystery and wondrous secret! That brute beasts should see the new-born Lord. * Lying in a manger! Blessed is the Virgin who merited to bear in her womb Christ the Lord. *Verse.* O Lord, I have heard Thy hearing and was afraid. I have considered Thy works and I have trembled, in the midst of two beasts. * Lying in a manger! Blessed is the Virgin who merited to bear in her womb Christ the Lord.

Lesson vi.

Sermon of St. Leo, Pope

Let us, therefore, dearly beloved, give thanks to God the Father, through His Son, in the Holy Ghost. Let us put off the old man with his acts, and, having been made partakers of the generation of Christ, let us renounce the works of the flesh. O Christian, learn thy dig-

nity; and, having been made a partaker of the divine nature, do not return by corrupt conversation to the old vileness. Be mindful of whose Body and whose Head you are a member. Remember how thou, having been snatched from the power of darkness, hast been translated into the light and the kingdom of God. Do not once again give thyself to the servitude of the devil, for thy price is the Blood of Christ, who will judge thee in truth, even as He has redeemed thee in mercy.

Responsory. O holy and immaculate Virginity, I know not with what praises I shall extol thee: * For thou didst bear in thy womb Him whom the heavens cannot contain. *Verse.* Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. * For thou didst bear in thy womb Him whom the heavens cannot contain.—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. * For thou didst bear in thy womb Him whom the heavens cannot contain.

Reading of the Holy Gospel according to Luke.

Lesson vii.

Luke II, 1-14

At that time: There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. And the rest.

Homily of St. Gregory, Pope.

Since, by the Lord's bounty, we are to celebrate thrice today the solemnities of the Mass, we cannot speak at length on the Gospel reading. But the very Nativity of our Redeemer compels us to say something, however brief. Why, then, is it that, when our Lord was about to be born, the world is enrolled, unless it be that hereby is shown that He who appeared in the flesh is He that will enroll His elect in eternity? Whereas the contrary is said of the reprobate by the prophet: Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; and with the just let them not be written. And well also is it said that He is born in Bethlehem. For Bethlehem signifies: House of bread. And this is He who said: I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven.

Responsory. Mary, the blessed Mother of God, whose womb remains stainless. * Has this day given birth to the Saviour of the world. *Verse.* Blessed is she that believed: for all those things are accomplished that were said to her by the Lord. * Has this day given birth to the Saviour of the world.

Reading of the Holy Gospel according to Luke.

Lesson viii.

Luke II, 15-20

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 shown us. And the rest.

Homily of St. Ambrose, Bishop.

Behold the beginning of the infant Church: Christ is born; and the shepherds are watching, as about to herd into the Lord's fold that Gentile flock which had hitherto lived like brute animals; and this, lest during the thick darkness of the night, they might suffer from the attacks of spiritual wild beasts. And well are the shepherds watching, whom the Good Shepherd trains. Hence the flock is the people; the night is the world; the shepherds are the priests. Or perhaps he also is a shepherd to whom it is said: Be watchful and strengthen. For God hath not only ordained bishops to guard His flock, but He hath also appointed Angels.

Responsory. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, that bore the Son of the Eternal Father: and blessed are the breasts that gave food to Christ the Lord: * Who deigned to be born this day of the Virgin for the salvation of the world. *Verse.* A holy day hath come upon us: come, ye Gentiles, and adore the Lord. * Who deigned this day to be born of the Virgin for the salvation of the world.

Reading of the Holy Gospel according to John.

Lesson ix.

John I, 1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. And the rest.

Homily of St. John Chrysostom.

While Matthew begins (his Gospel) with Herod, and Luke with Tiberius Caesar, and Mark with the baptism of John, John (the Evangelist) passes over all these things and rises above all time and age. Now, my dearly beloved, when you hear in this citation: The Word, do not, I pray, agree with those who say It is a word that comes forth from the mouth. For this Word is indeed a substance in person, proceeding without suffering from the Father Himself. Now, just as the phrase 'In the beginning was the Word' signifies eternity, so also does the phrase 'The same was in the beginning with God' show us co-eternity. For the Father was never alone without the Word, but always was God with God, and indeed in His proper person.

Responsory. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us: and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the Only-begotten of the Father. * Full of grace and truth. *Verse.* In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. * Full of grace and truth.—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. * Full of grace and truth.