

The Observance of Lent

THOUGH THE DIVINE mysteries whereby our Savior wrought our redemption have been consummated, yet are we still sinners: and where there is sin, there must be expiation.

The apostles, therefore, legislated for our weakness by instituting, at the very commencement of the Christian Church, that the solemnity of Easter should be preceded by a universal fast; and it was only natural that they should have made this period of penance to consist of forty days, seeing that our divine Master had consecrated that number by His own fast. St. Jerome, St. Leo the Great, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Isidore of Seville, and others of the holy fathers, assure us that Lent was instituted by the apostles, although, at the commencement, there was not any uniform way of observing it...

"The observance of Lent is the very badge of the Christian warfare. By it we prove ourselves not to be enemies of the cross of Christ. By it we avert the scourges of divine justice. By it we gain strength against the princes of darkness, for it shields us with heavenly help. Should mankind grow remiss in their observance of Lent, it would be a detriment to God's glory, a disgrace to the Catholic religion, and a danger to Christian souls. Neither can it be doubted that such negligence would become the source of misery to the world, of public calamity, and of private woe" [*Encyclical Non ambigimus, Pope Benedict XIV.*].

More than a hundred years have elapsed since this solemn warning of

the Vicar of Christ was given to the world; and during that time, the relaxation he inveighed against has gone on gradually increasing. How few Christians do we meet who are strict observers of Lent, even in its present mild form.

And must there not result from this ever-growing spirit of immortification, a general effeminacy of character, which will lead, at last, to frightful social disorders? The sad predictions of Pope Benedict XIV are but too truly verified. Those nations, among whose people the spirit and practice of penance are extinct, are heaping against themselves the wrath of God, and provoking his justice to destroy them by one or other of these scourges—civil discord, or conquest. In our own country there is an inconsistency, which must strike every thinking mind: the observance of the Lord's day, on the one side; the national inobservance of the days of penance and fasting, on the other. The first is admirable, and, if we except puritanical extravagances, bespeaks a deep-rooted sense of religion; but the second is one of the worst presages for the future. The word of God is unmistakable: unless we do penance, we shall perish (cf. Luke 13:3). But if our ease-loving and sensual generation were to return, like the Ninevites, to the long-neglected way of penance and expiation, who knows but that the arm of God, which is already raised to strike us, may give us blessing and not chastisement?



*Commentary from The Liturgical Year
by Dom Prosper Guéranger (1805-1875).*

Proper Prayers of the Mass in the Extraordinary Form Ash Wednesday



BLESSING OF THE ASHES

Antiphon (Psalm 68. 17)

EXÁUDI nos, Dómine, quóniam benígna est misericórdia tua: secúndum multitudínem miseratiónum tuárum réspice nos, Dómine. *Psalm.* Salvum me fac, Deus: quóniam intravérunt aquæ usque ad ánimam meam. *V.* Glória Patri, et Filio, et Spíritui Sancto. Sicut erat in princípío, et nunc, et semper, et in sæcula sæculórum. Amen. — Exáudi nos, Dómine ...

HEAR US, O Lord, for Thy mercy is kind: look upon us, O Lord, according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies. *Ps. ibid.* 2. Save me, O God: for the waters are come in even unto my soul. *V.* Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. — Hear us, O Lord ...

Afterwards the Priest, standing at the Epistle side, without turning towards the people, with his hands joined, says:

V. Dóminus vobiscum.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. Et cum spíritu tuo.

R. And with thy spirit.

Orémus — Omnipotens sempitérne Deus, parce poeniténtibus, propitiáre supplicántibus, et mittere dignéris sanctum Ángelum tuum de cœlis, qui benedícat, et sanctífícat hos cíneres, ut sint remédium salúbre ómnibus nomen sanctum tuum humiliter implorántibus, ac semetípsos pro consciéntia delictórum suórum accusántibus, ante conspéctum divínæ cleméntiæ tuæ facinora sua deplorántibus, vel serenissimam

Let us pray. — O Almighty and everlasting God, spare those who are penitent, be merciful to those who implore Thee; and vouchsafe to send Thy holy Angel from heaven, to bless and halólow these ashes, that they may be a wholesome remedy to all who humbly implore Thy Holy Name, and who accuse themselves, conscious of their sins, deploring their crimes before Thy divine Mercy, or

humbly and earnestly beseeching Thy Sovereign goodness: and grant through the invocation of Thy most Holy Name that whosoever shall be sprinkled with them for the remission of their sins may receive both health of body and safety of soul. Through Christ our Lord. *R.* Amen.

SECOND PRAYER

Let us pray. — O God, who desirest not the death, but the repentance of sinners, look down most graciously upon the frailty of human nature; and in Thy goodness vouchsafe to bless ✠ these ashes which we purpose to put upon our heads in token of our lowliness and to obtain forgiveness: so that we who know that we are but ashes, and for the demerits of our wickedness are to return to dust, may deserve to obtain from Thy mercy the pardon of all our sins, and the rewards promised to the penitent. Through Christ our Lord. *R.* Amen.

THIRD PRAYER

Let us pray. — O God, who art moved by humiliation, and appeased by satisfaction: incline the ear of Thy goodness to our prayers and mercifully pour forth upon the heads of Thy servants sprinkled with these ashes the grace of Thy blessing: that Thou mayest both fill them with the spirit of compunction, and effectually grant what they have justly prayed for: and ordain that what Thou has granted may be permanently established and remain unchanged. Through Christ our Lord. *R.* Amen.

FOURTH PRAYER

Let us pray. — Almighty and everlasting God, who didst vouchsafe Thy healing pardon to the Ninevites doing penance in sackcloth and ashes, mercifully grant that we may so imitate them in our outward

pietatem tuam suppliciter obnixéque flagitántibus: et præsta per invocatiónem sanctíssimi nóminis tui; ut quicumque per eos aspéri fuerint, pro redemptiône peccatórum suórum, córporis sanitátem, et ánimæ tutelam percipiant. Per Christum Dóminum nostrum. *R.* Amen.

Orémus. — Deus, qui non mortem, sed poeniténtiam desideras peccatórum: fragilitátem conditionis humanæ benigníssime respice; et hos cineres, quos causa proferendæ humilitátis, atque promerendæ vénia, capítibus nostris impóni decérimus, bene✠dicere pro tua pietáte dignáre: ut, qui nos cinerem esse, et ob pravitátis nostræ deméritum in púlverem reversúros cognóscimus; peccatórum ómnium véniam, et præmia poeniténtibus repromissa, misericórditer cónsequi mereámur. Per Christum Dóminum nostrum. *R.* Amen.

Orémus. — Deus, qui humiliatióne flécteris, et satisfactiône placáris: aurem tuæ pietátis inclína précibus nostris; et capítibus servórum tuórum, horum cinerum aspersiône contactis, effúnde propítius grátiam tuæ benedictiόνis: ut eos et spiritu compunctiόνis répleas, et quæ juste postuláverint, efficaciter tríbas; et concéssa perpétuo stabilita, et intácta manére decérnas. Per Christum Dóminum nostrum. *R.* Amen.

Orémus.—Omnípotens sempitérne Deus, qui Ninivitis in cinere et cilicio poeniténtibus, indulgéntiæ tuæ remédia præstitisti: concede propítius; ut sic eos imitémur hábitu, quâ-

super me: Dómine, clamávi ad te, et sanásti me.

to rejoice over me: O Lord, I have cried to Thee, and Thou hast healed me.

SECRET

FAC NOS, quæsumus, Dómine, his munéribus offeréndis conveniénter aptári: quibus ipsius venerábilis sacraménti celebrámus exórdium. Per Dóminum ...

MAKE US, we beg Thee, Lord, fit to offer as we should the gifts by which we celebrate the beginning of this venerable observance. Through our Lord ...

PREFACE FOR LENT

VERE dignum et justum est, æquum et salutáre, nos tibi semper, et ubique grátias ágere: Dómine sancte, Pater omnípotens, ætérne Deus: Qui corporáli jejúnio vítia cóprimis, mentem élevas, virtutem largírís, et præmia: per Christum Dóminum nostrum. Per quem majestátem tuam laudant Ángeli, adórant Dominatiónes, tremunt Potestátes. Cæli, cælórumque Virtútes, ac beáta Séraphim, sócia exultatióne concélebrant. Cum quibus et nostras voces, ut admitti júbeas, deprecámur, súpplici confessiône dicéntes: — *Sanctus.*

IT is truly meet and just, right and for our salvation, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to Thee, holy Lord, Father almighty, eternal God: Who by this bodily fast dost curb our vices, lift our minds, strength and rewards bestow; through Christ our Lord. Through Whom Angels praise Thy Majesty, Dominations worship, Powers stand in awe. The Heavens and the hosts of heaven with blessed Seraphim unite, exult, and celebrate. And we entreat that Thou wouldst bid our voices too be heard with theirs, singing with lowly praise: — *Sanctus.*

COMMUNION (Psalm 1. 2, 3)

QUI meditábitur in lege Dómini die ac nocte, dabit fructum suum in tẽpore suo.

HE that shall meditate day and night on the law of the Lord, shall bring forth his fruit in due season.

POSTCOMMUNION

PERCÉPTA nobis, Dómine, præbeant sacraménta subsidiúm: ut tibi grata sint nostra jejúnia, et nobis proficiant ad medélam. Per Dóminum nostrum ...

MAY the Sacraments we have received, afford us help, O Lord, that our fasts may be pleasing to Thee and profitably healing to us. Through our Lord ...

PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE

Orémus—Humiliáte cápita vestra Deo.

Let us pray. — Bow down your heads before God.

INCLINÁNTES se, Dómine, majestáti tuæ, propitiaties inténde: ut qui divíno múnere sunt refécti, cœlestibus semper nutriántur auxiliis. Per Dóminum nostrum Jesum Christum...

LOOK graciously, O Lord, upon us who bow down before Thy Majesty: that we who have been refreshed by Thy divine Gift may ever be sustained by Thy heavenly aid. Through our Lord ...

GRADUAL (Psalm 56. 2, 4)

HAVE mercy on me, O Lord, have mercy on me: for my soul trusteth in Thee. He hath sent from heaven and delivered me: He hath made them a reproach that trod upon me.

TRACT (Psalm 102. 10)

O LORD, repay us not according to the sins we have committed, nor according to our iniquities. (Ps. 78. 8, 9.) O Lord, remember not our former iniquities, let Thy mercies speedily prevent us: for we are become exceeding poor. (Here kneel.) Help us, O God, our Savior: and for the glory of Thy Name, O Lord, deliver us: and forgive us our sins for Thy Name's sake.

GOSPEL

Continuation of the holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, 6. 16-21.

AT THAT TIME Jesus said to His disciples: When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret, will repay thee. Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.

OFFERTORY (Psalm 29. 2, 3)

I WILL extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast upheld me, and hast not made my enemies

MISERÉRE mei, Deus, miserere mei: quóniam in te confidit ánima mea. V. Misit de cælo, et liberávit me: dedit in oppróbrium conculcántes me.

DÓMINE, non secúndum peccáta nostra, quæ fécimus nos: neque secúndum iniquitátes nostras retribuas nobis. V. Dómine, ne memineris iniquitátum nostrárum antiquárum, cito anticipent nos misericórdiæ tuæ: quia páuperes facti sumus nimis. (Hic genufléctitur) V. Adjuva nos, Deus salutáris noster: et propter glóriam nóminis tui, Dómine, libera nos: et propítius esto peccátis nostris, propter nomen tuum.

IN ILLO TÊMPORE: Dixit Jesus discipulis suis: Cum jejúnátis, nolíte fieri sicut hypocritæ, tristes. Extérminant enim fácies suas, ut appareant hominibus jejúnátes. Amen dico vobis, quia recepérunt mercédem suam. Tu autem, cum jejúnas, unge caput tuum, et fáciem tuam lava, ne videáris hominibus jejúnans, sed Patri tuo, qui est in abscondito: et Pater tuus, qui videt in abscondito, reddet tibi. Nolíte thesaurizáre vobis thesauros in terra: ubi ærúgo et tínea demolítur: et ubi fures effódiunt, et furántur. The-saurizáte autem vobis thesauros in cælo: ubi neque ærúgo neque tínea demolítur, et ubi fures non effódiunt nec furántur. Ubi enim est thesáurus tuus, ibi est et cor tuum.

EXALTÁBO te, Dómine, quóniam suscepísti me, nec delectásti inimicos meos

tenuis véniæ prosequámur obténtu. Per Dóminum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, Qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spíritus Sancti, Deus, per omnia sæcula sæculórum. R. Amen.

attitude as to follow them in obtaining forgiveness. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who with Thee liveth and reigneth in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. R. Amen.

The Priest then sprinkles the ashes thrice with holy water, and incenses them thrice, saying the Antiphon:

Antiphon (Joel 2. 13)

ASPÉRGES ME, Dómine, hyssópo, et mundábor: lavábis me, et super nivem dealbábor.

THOU SHALT sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall become whiter than snow.

After which, having first received the ashes on his own head from the highest in dignity of the clergy, he proceeds to place them in the form of a cross on the heads or foreheads of the clergy and people, saying to each:

MEMÉNTO, homo, quia pulvis es, et in púlverem revertéris.

(Gen. 3. 19) Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return.

Meanwhile, the choir sings the following Antiphons and Responses:

Antiphon (Joel 2. 13)

IMMUTÉMUR hábitu, in cinere et cilício; jejunémus, et plorémus ante Dóminum: quia multum miséricors est dimittere peccáta nostra Deus noster.

LET US change our garments for ashes and sackcloth: let us fast and lament before the Lord: for plenteous in mercy is our God to forgive our sins.

Another Antiphon (Joel 2. 17)

INTER vestibulum et altáre plorábunt sacerdótes ministri Dómini, et dicent: Parce, Dómine, parce pópulo tuo: et ne claudas ora canéntium te, Dómine.

BETWEEN the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people: and close not the mouths of them that sing to Thee, O Lord.

Response (Esther 13; Joel 2)

EMENDÉMUS in mélius, quæ ignoránter peccávimus: ne súbito præoccupáti die mortis, quæramus spátium poeniténtiæ, et invenire non possimus.

LET US AMEND for the better in those things in which we have sinned through ignorance: lest suddenly overtaken by the day of death, we seek space for repentance and are not able to find it.

Atténde, Dómine, et miserére: quia peccávimus tibi.

Attend, O Lord, and have mercy: for we have sinned against Thee.

Adjuva nos, Deus salutáris noster: et propter honórem nóminis tui, Dómine, libera nos.

V. (Ps. 78. 9) Help us, O God, our Savior: and for the glory of Thy Name, O Lord, deliver us.

Attend, O Lord ...
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost.
Attend, O Lord ...

Attēde, Dómine ...
Glória Patri et Filio, et
Spíritui Sancto.

Attēde, Dómine ...

When all have received the ashes, the Priest says:

Ÿ. The Lord be with you.

Ÿ. Dóminus vobiscum.

Ř. And with thy spirit.

Ř. Et cum spiritu tuo.

Let us pray.—Grant us, Lord, the grace to begin the Christian's war of defense with holy fasts: that, as we do battle with the spirits of evil, we may be protected by the help of self-denial. Through Christ our Lord. Ř. Amen.

Orémus.—Concēde nobis, Dómine, præsidia militiæ christiánæ sanctis inchoare jejúniis: ut contra spirituales nequitas pugnaturi, continentiæ muniamur auxiliis. Per Christum Dóminum nostrum. Ř. Amen.



THE MASS

There are no prayers at the foot of the Altar; the Introit is begun at once.

INTROIT (Wisdom 11. 24, 25, 27)

THOU hast mercy upon all, O Lord, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made, overlooking the sins of men for the sake of repentance, and sparing them: because Thou art the Lord our God. *Ps. 56. 2.* Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me: for my soul trusteth in Thee. Ÿ. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. — Thou hast mercy...

MISÉRERIS ómnium, Dómine, et nihil odísti eórum quæ fecísti, dissimulans peccata hóminum propter poenitentiam et parcens illis: quia tu es Dóminus Deus noster. *Psalm.* Miserere mei, Deus, miserere mei: quóniam in te confidit ánima mea. Ÿ. Glória Patri, et Filio, et Spíritui Sancto. Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in sæcula sæculórum. Amen. — Misereris ...

COLLECT

PRÆSTA, Dómine, fidélibus tuis: ut jejuniórum veneranda solémnia, et cóngrua pietate suscipiant, et secúra devotióne percúrrant. Per Dóminum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, Qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spíritus Sancti, Deus, per omnia sæcula sæculórum.

GRANT, O Lord, to Thy faithful people, that they may undertake with fitting piety this period of fasting, and complete it with steadfast devotion. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who with Thee liveth and reigneth in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end.



LESSON

From the Prophet Joel, 2. 12-19.

HÆC dicit Dóminus: Convertimini ad me in toto corde vestro, in jejúnió, et in fletu, et in planctu. Et scíndite corda vestra, et non vestiménta vestra, et convertimini ad Dóminum Deum vestrum: quia benignus et miséricors est, pátiens et multæ misericórdiæ, et præstabilis super malítia. Quis scit, si convertátur, et ignóscat, et relínquat post se benedictionem, sacrificium, et libámen Dómino Deo vestro? Cánite tuba in Sion, sanctificáte jejúni-um, vocáte cœtum, congregáte pópulum, sanctificáte ecclési- am, coadunáte senes, congregáte párvulos, et sugéntes úbera: egrediátur sponsus de cubili suo, et sponsa de thálamo suo. Inter vestibulum et altáre plorábunt sacerdótes ministri Dómini, et dicent: Parce, Dómine, parce pópulo tuo: et ne des hereditátem tuam in oppróbrium, ut dominéntur eis nati-ónes. Quare dicunt in pópulis: Ubi est Deus eórum? Zelátus est Dóminus terram suam, et pepércit pópulo suo. Et respóndit Dóminus, et dixit pópulo suo: Ecce ego mittam vobis fruméntum, et vinum, et óleum, et replebimini eis: et non dabo vos ultra oppróbrium in géntibus: dicit Dóminus omnipotens.

THUS SAITH the Lord: be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping and in mourning. And rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to repent of the evil. Who knoweth but He will return and forgive and leave a blessing behind Him, sacrifice and libation to the Lord your God? Blow the trumpet in Sion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather together the people, sanctify the Church, assemble the ancients, gather together the little ones and them that suck at the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth from his bed and the bride out of her bride-chamber. Between the porch and the altar the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people: and give not Thine inheritance to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them. Why should they say among the nations: Where is their God? The Lord hath been zealous for His land, and hath spared His people. And the Lord answered and said to His people: Behold I will send you corn and wine and oil, and you shall be filled with them: and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations: saith the Lord almighty.