

Liturgy of the Hours
LITURGY OF THE HOURS

OFFICE OF READINGS

January 21, 2011

{ Memorial – Agnes, Virgin and Martyr }



Stand and make sign of cross

God, come to my assistance.

— Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be for ever. Amen. Alleluia.

HYMN

Faith of our fathers! faith and prayer
Shall win all nations unto thee;
And through the truth that comes from God,
Mankind shall then indeed be free.

Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

Faith of our fathers! we will love
Both friend and foe in all our strife:
And preach thee too, as love knows how,
By kindly deeds and virtuous life.

Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

*Melody: Saint Catherine L.M. with Refrain; Music: Henri F. Hemy, 1818-1888 and
James G. Walton, 1821-1905; Text: Frederick W. Faber, 1814-1863*

Sit or stand

PSALMODY

Antiphon 1

Lord, in your anger, do not punish me.

Psalm 38

*A sinner in extreme danger prays earnestly to God
All his friends were standing at a distance (Luke 23:49).*

I

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger; *

do not punish me, Lord, in your rage.
Your arrows have sunk deep in me; *
your hand has come down upon me.

Through your anger all my body is sick: *
through my sin, there is no health in my limbs.
My guilt towers higher than my head; *
it is a weight too heavy to bear.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, *
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, *
and will be for ever. Amen.

Antiphon

Lord, in your anger, do not punish me.

Antiphon 2

Lord, you know all my longings.

II

My wounds are foul and festering, *
the result of my own folly.
I am bowed and brought to my knees. *
I go mourning all the day long.

All my frame burns with fever; *
all my body is sick.
Spent and utterly crushed, *
I cry aloud in anguish of heart.

O Lord, you know all my longing: *
my groans are not hidden from you.
My heart throbs, my strength is spent; *
the very light has gone from my eyes.

My friends avoid me like a leper; *
those closest to me stand afar off.
Those who plot against my life lay snares; †
those who seek my ruin speak of harm, *
planning treachery all the day long.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, *
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, *
and will be for ever. Amen.

Antiphon

Lord, you know all my longings.

Antiphon 3

I confess my guilt to you, Lord; do not abandon me, for you are my savior.

III

But I am like the deaf who cannot hear, *
like the dumb unable to speak.
I am like a man who hears nothing, *
in whose mouth is no defense.

I count on you, O Lord: *
it is you, Lord God, who will answer.
I pray: "Do not let them mock me, *
those who triumph if my foot should slip."

For I am on the point of falling *
and my pain is always before me.
I confess that I am guilty *
and my sin fills me with dismay.

My wanton enemies are numberless *
and my lying foes are many.
They repay me evil for good *
and attack me for seeking what is right.

O Lord, do not forsake me! *
My God, do not stay afar off!
Make haste and come to my help, *
O Lord, my God, my savior!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, *
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, *

and will be for ever. Amen.

Antiphon

I confess my guilt to you, Lord; do not abandon me, for you are my savior.

VERSE

My eyes keep watch for your saving help.

— Awaiting the word that will justify me.

Sit

READINGS

First reading

From the book of Deuteronomy

10:12—11:9, 26-28

God alone decides

Moses spoke to the people, saying:

“And now, Israel, what does the Lord, your God, ask of you but to fear the Lord, your God, and follow his ways exactly, to love and serve the Lord, your God, with all your heart and all your soul, to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord which I enjoin on you today for your own good? Think! The heavens, even the highest heavens, belong to the Lord, your God, as well as the earth and everything on it. Yet in his love for your fathers the Lord was so attached to them as to choose you, their descendants, in preference to all other peoples, as indeed he has now done.

“Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and be no longer stiff-necked. For the Lord, your God, is the God of gods, the Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who has no favorites, accepts no bribes; who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and befriends the alien, feeding and clothing him. So you too must befriend the alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. The Lord, your God, shall you fear, and him shall you serve; hold fast to him and swear by his name. He is your glory, he, your God, who has done for you those great and terrible things

which your own eyes have seen. Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy strong, and now the Lord, your God, has made you as numerous as the stars of the sky.

“Love the Lord, your God, therefore, and always heed his charge: his statutes, decrees and commandments.

“It is not your children, who have not known it from experience, but you yourselves who must now understand the discipline of the Lord, your God; his majesty, his strong hand and outstretched arm; the signs and deeds he wrought among the Egyptians, on Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and on all his land; what he did to the Egyptian army and to their horses and chariots, engulfing them in the water of the Red Sea as they pursued you, and bringing ruin upon them even to this day; what he did for you in the desert until you arrived in this place; and what he did to the Reubenites Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, when the ground opened its mouth and swallowed them up out of the midst of Israel, with their families and tents and every living thing that belonged to them.

“With your own eyes you have seen all these great deeds that the Lord has done. Keep all the commandments, then, which I enjoin on you today, that you may be strong enough to enter in and take possession of the land into which you are crossing, and that you may have long life on the land which the Lord swore to your fathers he would give to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.

“I set before you here, this day, a blessing and a curse: a blessing for obeying the commandments of the Lord, your God, which I enjoin on you today; a curse if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord, your God, but turn aside from the way I ordain for you today, to follow other gods, whom you have not known.”

Responsory

1 John 4:19; 5:3; 2:5

Let us love God, for he first loved us. To love God means keeping his commandments,

— and his commandments are not burdensome.

The love of God reaches perfection in those who are obedient to his word.

— And his commandments are not burdensome.

Second reading

From a treatise On Virgins by Saint Ambrose, bishop

(Lib. 1, cap. 2. 5. 7-9: PL 16 [edit. 1845], 189-191)

Too young to be punished, yet old enough for a martyr's crown

Today is the birthday of a virgin; let us imitate her purity. It is the birthday of a martyr; let us offer ourselves in sacrifice. It is the birthday of Saint Agnes, who is said to have suffered martyrdom at the age of twelve. The cruelty that did not spare her youth shows all the more clearly the power of faith in finding one so young to bear it witness.

There was little or no room in that small body for a wound. Though she could scarcely receive the blow, she could rise superior to it. Girls of her age cannot bear even their parents' frowns and, pricked by a needle, weep as for a serious wound. Yet she shows no fear of the blood-stained hands of her executioners. She stands undaunted by heavy, clanking chains. She offers her whole body to be put to the sword by fierce soldiers. She is too young to know of death, yet is ready to face it. Dragged against her will to the altars, she stretches out her hands to the Lord in the midst of the flames, making the triumphant sign of Christ the victor on the altars of sacrilege. She puts her neck and hands in iron chains, but no chain can hold fast her tiny limbs.

A new kind of martyrdom! Too young to be punished, yet old enough for a martyr's crown; unfitted for the contest, yet effortless in victory, she shows herself a master in valor despite the handicap of youth. As a bride she would not be hastening to join her husband with the same joy she shows as a virgin on her way to punishment, crowned not with flowers but with holiness of life, adorned not with braided hair but with Christ himself.

In the midst of tears, she sheds no tears herself. The crowds marvel at her recklessness in throwing away her life untasted, as if she had

already lived life to the full. All are amazed that one not yet of legal age can give her testimony to God. So she succeeds in convincing others of her testimony about God, though her testimony in human affairs could not yet be accepted. What is beyond the power of nature, they argue, must come from its creator.

What menaces there were from the executioner, to frighten her; what promises made, to win her over; what influential people desired her in marriage! She answered: "To hope that any other will please me does wrong to my Spouse. I will be his who first chose me for himself. Executioner, why do you delay? If eyes that I do not want can desire this body, then let it perish." She stood still, she prayed, she offered her neck.

You could see fear in the eyes of the executioner, as if he were the one condemned; his right hand trembled, his face grew pale as he saw the girl's peril, while she had no fear for herself. One victim, but a twin martyrdom, to modesty and to religion; Agnes preserved her virginity, and gained a martyr's crown.

Responsory

Let us keep the feast of Saint Agnes by recalling all that she suffered.

— While still so young, she overcame death and found true life.

For the giver of life was her only love.

— While still so young, she overcame death and found true life.

Stand

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Let us pray.

Almighty, eternal God,
you choose what the world considers weak
to put the worldly power to shame.
May we who celebrate the birth of Saint Agnes into eternal joy
be loyal to the faith she professed.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

— Amen.

Acclamation

Let us praise the Lord.

— And give him thanks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The English Translation of the Introductory Verses and Responses, the Invitatories, the Antiphons, Captions and Patristic Commentaries for the Psalms, Psalm-prayers, Responsories, Intercessions, Greeting, Blessings, and Dismissal, Non-Biblical Readings, and Hagiographical Introductions from *The Liturgy of the Hours* © 1974, 1975, 1976, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. (ICEL); the Alternative Opening Prayers and the English translation of the Opening Prayers (Prayers of the Day) from *The Roman Missal* © 1973, ICEL. All rights reserved.

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