Liturgy of the Hours

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Office of Readings

December 28, 2026

{ Feast – Holy Innocents, Martyrs }

Liturgy of the Hours
EBREVIARY

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

Let us with hymns and songs acclaim
the martyred, holy Innocents,
those whom the weeping earth once lost
but heaven claimed with holy joy.

The children wicked Herod slew
their loving Maker gathered up
to live with him, together blest,
in his eternal realm of light.

The blameless death of Innocents
shone bright for Christ with splendid light;
the angels bore them heavenward,
these little ones, two years and less.

How blest the city Bethlehem,
where our Redeemer Christ was born
and where the first to shed their blood
bore witness to the newborn King.

They stand resplendent round his throne,
their clothes now bright with brilliant light;
they were the first to wash their robes
in crimson blood of Christ the Lamb.

To you, Lord Jesus, glory be,
the Virgin Mother's newborn Son,
with God the Father, ever blest
and loving Spirit, ever one. Amen.

Metrical hymn, melody: St Venantius, 8 8 8 8; Rouen church melody, 1728

Plainsong, mode IV, melody 78; Liber Hymnarius, Solesmes, 1983, Text: Hymnum canentes martyrum, St. Bede the Venerable, O.S.B., ca. 672–735*

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Sit or stand

Psalmody

Antiphon 1

Lord, these little ones praise you and skip with joy like lambs, for you have set them free.

Psalm 2

The Messiah, king and conqueror

The rulers of the earth joined forces to overthrow Jesus, your anointed Son (Acts 4:27).

Why this túmult among nátions, *
among péoples this úseless múrmuring?
They aríse, the kíngs of the éarth, *
princes plót against the Lórd and his Anóinted.
"Cóme let us bréak their fétters, *
cóme, let us cást off their yóke."

He who síts in the héavens láughs; *
the Lórd is láughing them to scórn.
Thén he will spéak in his ánger, *
his rágе will stríke them with térror.
"It is Í who have sét up my kíng *
on Zíon, my hóly móuntain."

I will annóunce the decrée of the Lórd: †
The Lórd said to me: "Yóu are my Són. *
It is Í who have begótten you this dáy.
Ásk and I shall bequéath you the nátions, *
put the énds of the éarth in your possession.
With a ród of íron you will bréak them, *

shátter them like a pótter's jár."

Nów, O kíngs, understánd, *
take wárning, rúlers of the éarth;
sérve the Lórd with áwe *
and trémbling, páy him your hómage
lést he be ángry and you pérish; *
for súddenly his ánger will bláze.

Blessed are théy *
who put their trúst in Gód.

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, these little ones praise you and skip with joy like lambs, for you have set them free.

Antiphon 2

These are the first of mankind to be won for God and the Lamb; innocent, they stand before the throne of God.

Psalm 33

Song of praise for God's continual care

Through the Word all things were made (John 1:3).

I

Ring out your jóy to the Lórd, O you júst; *
for praise is fítting for lóyal héarts.

Give thánks to the Lórd upon the hárp, *
with a tén-stringed lúte sing him sóngs.
O síng him a sóng that is néw, *
play lóudly, with áll your skíll.

For the wórd of the Lórd is fáithful *
and áll his wórks to be trústed.
The Lórd loves jústice and ríght *
and fílls the éarth with his lóve.

By his wórd the héavens were máde, *
by the bréath of his móuth all the stárs.
He collécts the wáves of the ócean; *
he stóres up the dépths of the séa.

Let all the éarth féar the Lórd, *
all who líve in the wórld revére him.
He spóke; and it cáme to bé. *
He commánded; it spráng into béing.

He frustrátes the desígns of the nátions, *
he deféats the pláns of the péoples.
His ówn designs shall stánd for éver, *
the pláns of his héart from age to áge.

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

These are the first of mankind to be won for God and the Lamb; innocent, they stand before the throne of God.

Antiphon 3

Joy and everlasting gladness will be their lot. They will never again know sorrow and pain.

II

They are háppy, whose Gód is the Lórd, *
the péople he has chósen as his ówn.
From the héavens the Lórd looks fórth, *
he sées all the chíldren of mén.

From the pláce where he dwélls he gázes *
on áll the dwéllers on the éarth,
he who shápes the héarts of them áll *
and consíders áll their déeds.

A kíng is not sáved by his ármy, *
nor a wárrior preserved by his stréngth.

A váin hope for sáfety is the hórse; *
despíte its pówer it cannot sáve.

The Lórd looks on thóse who revére him, *
on thóse who hópe in his lóve,
to réscue their sóuls from déath, *
to kéep them alíve in fámine.

Our sóul is wáiting for the Lórd. *
The Lórd is our hélp and our shíeld.
In hím do our héarts find jóy. *
We trúst in his hóly náme.

May your lóve be upón us, O Lórd, *
as we pláce all our hópe in yóu.

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

Joy and everlasting gladness will be their lot. They will never again know sorrow and pain.

Verse

These holy ones sang a new song before the throne of God and the Lamb.

— Earth resounds with the echo of their song.

Sit

Readings

First reading

From the book of Exodus

1:8-16, 22

Slaughter of the Hebrew children in Egypt

A new king, who knew nothing of Joseph , came to power in Egypt. He said to his subjects, "Look how numerous and powerful

the Israelite people are growing, more so than we ourselves! Come, let us deal shrewdly with them to stop their increase; otherwise, in time of war they too may join our enemies to fight against us, and so leave our country."

Accordingly, taskmasters were set over the Israelites to oppress them with forced labor. Thus they had to build for Pharaoh the supply cities of Pithom and Raamses. Yet the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread. The Egyptians, then, dreaded the Israelites and reduced them to cruel slavery, making life bitter for them with hard work in mortar and brick and all kinds of field work—the whole cruel fate of slaves.

The king of Egypt told the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was called Shiphrah and the other Puah, When you act as midwives for the Hebrew women and see them giving birth, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she may live."

Pharaoh then commanded all his subjects, "Throw into the river every boy that is born to the Hebrews, but you may let all the girls live."

Responsory

Isaiah 65:19; Revelation 21:4, 5

I will take delight in my people.

— Never again will weeping and crying be heard among them.

Death shall be no more; grief, tears and sorrow will be forgotten, for behold I make all things new.

— Never again will weeping and crying be heard among them.

Second reading

From a sermon by Saint Quodvultdeus, bishop

(Sermo 2 de Symbolo: PL 40, 655)

They cannot speak, yet they bear witness to Christ

A tiny child is born, who is a great king. Wise men are led to him from afar. They come to adore one who lies in a manger and yet reigns in heaven and on earth. When they tell of one who is born

a king, Herod is disturbed. To save his kingdom he resolves to kill him, though if he would have faith in the child, he himself would reign in peace in this life and for ever in the life to come.

Why are you afraid, Herod, when you hear of the birth of a king? He does not come to drive you out, but to conquer the devil. But because you do not understand this you are disturbed and in a rage, and to destroy one child whom you seek, you show your cruelty in the death of so many children.

You are not restrained by the love of weeping mothers or fathers mourning the deaths of their sons, nor by the cries and sobs of the children. You destroy those who are tiny in body because fear is destroying your heart. You imagine that if you accomplish your desire you can prolong your own life, though you are seeking to kill Life himself.

Yet your throne is threatened by the source of grace—so small, yet so great—who is lying in the manger. He is using you, all unaware of it, to work out his own purposes freeing souls from captivity to the devil. He has taken up the sons of the enemy into the ranks of God's adopted children.

The children die for Christ, though they do not know it. The parents mourn for the death of martyrs. The child makes of those as yet unable to speak fit witnesses to himself. See the kind of kingdom that is his, coming as he did in order to be this kind of king. See how the deliverer is already working deliverance, the savior already working salvation.

But you, Herod, do not know this and are disturbed and furious. While you vent your fury against the child, you are already paying him homage, and do not know it.

How great a gift of grace is here! To what merits of their own do the children owe this kind of victory? They cannot speak, yet they bear witness to Christ. They cannot use their limbs to engage in battle, yet already they bear off the palm of victory.

Responsory

Revelation 5:14; 4:10; 7:11

They worshiped him who lives for ever and ever;

— they laid their crowns before the throne of the Lord their God.

They fell on their faces before his throne, and gave praise to him who lives for ever and ever.

— They laid their crowns before the throne of the Lord their God.

Stand

Te Deum

You are God: we praise you;
You are the Lord: we acclaim you;
You are the eternal Father:
All creation worships you.

To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
Cherubim and Seraphim, sing in endless praise:
Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

The glorious company of apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.

Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you:
Father, of majesty unbounded,
your true and only Son, worthy of all worship,
and the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.

You, Christ, are the King of glory,
the eternal Son of the Father.

When you became man to set us free
you did not spurn the Virgin's womb.

You overcame the sting of death,
and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

You are seated at God's right hand in glory.
We believe that you will come, and be our judge.

Come then, Lord, and help your people,
bought with the price of your own blood,
and bring us with your saints
to glory everlasting.

Concluding Prayer

Let us pray.

Father,
the Holy Innocents offered you praise
by the death they suffered for Christ.
May our lives bear witness
to the faith we profess with our lips.

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

— Amen.

Acclamation

Let us praise the Lord.

— And give him thanks.

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