

Ember Days of Advent

(Purple)

HISTORY OF THESE DAYS

Ember (ash) days are a very old and holy tradition of the Church; older than Advent. Four times a year, at the change of the seasons, three days of the week - Wednesday, Friday and Saturday - are given to prayer and fasting for old sins and to ask God's blessing on the new season, its activities (planting, growth, harvest) and on the sacred ordinations which are traditionally conferred during the vigil Mass on Saturday.

We have a sermon preached by Pope Leo I (5th century) on this observance. From it, we can get a good understanding of the Ember Days. We quote:

"Dearly beloved brethren, with the care proper to us as the shepherd of your souls, we urge upon you the strict keeping of this December fast... The fruits of the year drawing to a close have now been gathered in, fittingly therefore do we offer our fasting to God as a sacrifice of thanksgiving... By this exercise we draw near to God, we make a strong stand against the devil... Fasting has ever been the bread of strength... But since fasting is not the only means to secure health for our spirits, let us add works of mercy. Spend in good deeds what you draw from your abundance. Our fast must be turned into a banquet."

Ember Wednesday in Advent

The Introit Isaiah 45; Psalm 19

Tone 1a



Antiphon:

Shower, O heavens, from above, *
and let the skies rain down righteousness;
let the earth open, that salvation may spring up, *
and let it cause righteousness to sprout up also;

Psalm:

1 The heavens declare the glory of God, *
and the firmament shows his handiwork.

[2 One day tells its tale to another, *
and one night imparts knowledge to another.

- 3 Although they have no words or language, *
and their voices are not heard,
- 4 Their sound has gone out into all lands, *
and their message to the ends of the world.
- 5 In the deep has he set a pavilion for the sun; *
it comes forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber;
it rejoices like a champion to run its course.
- 6 It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens
and runs about to the end of it again; *
nothing is hidden from its burning heat.
- 9 The fear of the LORD is clean and endures for ever; *
the judgments of the LORD are true
and righteous altogether
- 11 By them also is your servant enlightened, *
and in keeping them there is great reward.]

Gloria Patri:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, *
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever,
for all ages of ages. Amen

Repeat Antiphon

The Kyrie, No Gloria

The Collect

Let us pray...Let us kneel...Arise!

Almighty God, we pray that the coming feast of our redemption
may give us help in this present life and bestow on us the blessings

of everlasting happiness, through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages. *Amen*

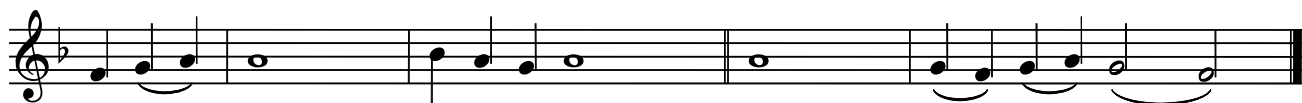
The Old Testament: **Isaiah 2, 2-5**

In those days the Prophet Isaiah said: In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

The Gradual

Psalm 23

Tone Ia



- 7 Lift up your heads, O gates;
lift them high, O everlasting doors; *
and the King of glory shall come in.
- 3 "Who can ascend the hill of the LORD? " *
and who can stand in his holy place?"
- 4 "Those who have clean hands and a pure heart, *
who have not pledged themselves to falsehood,
nor sworn by what is a fraud.

The Second Collect

Hasten, we pray you O Lord, and do not delay; bestow on us the help of your heavenly power, that trusting in your divine goodness we may be aided by strengthening power of your coming; who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages. *Amen*

The Second Old Testament: **Isaiah 7:10-15**

In those days, Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the virgin is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.

The Gradual **Psalm 144**

Tone 1a



- 19** The LORD is near to those who call upon him, *
to all who call upon him faithfully.
- 22** My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD; *
let all flesh bless his holy Name for ever and ever.

The Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

At that time In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'

The Offertory Isaiah 35

Tone III



4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart, *

'Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.*

He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.'

The Prayer over the Gifts:

O Lord, we pray that our fasting may be acceptable to you, and by your grace may us worthy of its purifying power and bring us to your everlasting promises; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages. *Amen*

The Preface of Advent

Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.

The Communion: Isaiah 7

Tone 1a



14 Behold, the virgin is with child and shall bear a son, *
and shall name him Emmanuel.

The Postcommunion:

O Lord, we are refreshed by these holy mysteries of your salvation. We humbly pray that as we rejoice in receiving it, we may also be renewed by its grace; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for all ages of ages. *Amen*