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Notker Balbulus
The Hymnbook

Christmastide
[N.04] – [N.10]

**For Christmas Day
25th December**

[N.04] Natus ante saecula

Born before ages, the Son of God – invisible, without end, through Whom is fashioned the fabric of heaven and earth, the sea and what liveth in them, through Whom the days and hours course and renew themselves, Whom the angels in the vault of heaven ever sing with harmonious voice – had assumed here a fragile body, without stain of original sin, of the flesh of the Virgin Mary, by which He might cleanse the guilt of our first father and the concupiscence of Eve.

This day is called bright before all others, its length increased, because the true sun, born anew, has banished the ancient shadows of the world with the radiance of its light.

Nor was the night without the illumination of a new star, which startled the knowing eyes of the magi.

Nor did the shepherds of the flocks lack this light, before whom shone the brightness of the hosts of God.

Rejoice thou, o Mother of God, about whom stand assembled, in place of attendants, angels singing glory to God!

O Christ, only Son of the Father, Who didst assume human form for our sake, kindle Thou anew Thy suppliants, and o Jesu, do Thou vouchsafe to receive our prayers, of whom Thou didst once deign to participate, so that, o God, Thou might make us worthy to participate of Thy divinity, only Son of God!

**For St. Stephen, First Martyr
26th December**

[N.05] Hanc concordi famulatu

Let us celebrate this feast in harmonious company, taught by the kindly example of its author who didst pray for the deceit of his persecutors!

O Stephen, highest standard bearer of the good king, do thou hear us, thou who wast heard on behalf of thy enemies to their advantage!

By thy prayers, o Stephen, Paul who once persecuted thee believeth in Christ, and rejoiceth with thee in the kingdom to which no persecutor draweth nigh.

So, may thy most holy intercession reconcile us – suppliant and calling upon thee and beating upon thee with our prayers – alway to our God!

Peter appointed thee a minister of Christ: Thou didst provide to Peter an example of belief when thou shewest at the right hand of the Highest Father the One whom the raging mob crucified.

Christ chose thee for Himself, o Stephen, by whom He might strengthen His faithful, manifesting Himself to thee as consolation amidst the wheeling of stones.

Now thou art crowned and shinest amidst the glorious purple of martyrs.

**For St. John, Apostle & Evangelist
27th December**

[N.06] Johannes Jesu Christo

O John, of Christ Jesus the highly favoured virgin: for love of Him didst thou leave thy earthly father in the boat.

Thou didst spurn the soft breast of a spouse to follow the Messiah, so that thou shouldst be found worthy to drink the sacred water of His breast.

And thou, whilst on earth, didst see the glory of the Son of God, which we believe glimpsed in this ongoing life by the saints alone.

Christ, triumphing on the cross, made thee guardian of His Mother, so that, as virgin, thou shouldst serve virgin and supply aid.

Broken by prison and the lash thou didst rejoice to be witness for Christ.

In like manner thou raisest the dead and conquerest strong poison in Jesus' name.

To thee the highest Father revealeth His word, hidden to others.

Do thou commend us alway before God with thy unceasing prayers, o John, beloved of Christ!

**For Childermas Day
28th December**

[N.07] Laus tibi Christe

Praise be to Thee, o Christ, to Whom is wisdom what to others seemeth folly: in Whose congregation every sex and age gathereth together!

Thy fresh and tender soldiers, cut down by Herod's sword, preached Thee today: Although their tongues allowed not yet, nevertheless they proclaimed Thee, o Christ, by the shedding of their blood, pouring forth milk with gore to cry unto God, Who pitieth even the wet cheeks of the innocent child.

Which of athletes the bravest ever won so mighty a victory, o Christ, with his soldiers, as Thou, mewling, bestowed on Thy agemates, dispatching them to rule in heaven for ever?

O illustrious preachers of Christ and the glorious flowers of martyrs... and the distinguished jewels of holy confessors and virgins barren in the world, dear little children, sweet little boys, help ye us with your prayers!

May Christ, pitying your innocent death, ripened for His sake, be gracious to hear them and make us worthy of His kingdom!

For Mary, Mother of God
1st January

[N.08] Gaude Maria virgo

Rejoice thou, o Mary, virgin Mother of God, who didst believe in pious hope the promises of Gabriel!

Thou, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, whilst unbroken, bearest a Son, Who ruleth the fabric of the world.

Angels sing for thy delivery at the watchtower of the flock, because there lieth, in a manger of the city of Bethlehem, their Ruler.

A heavenly messenger taught thee the name Jesus, which, undefiled, thou shouldst bestow on thy Son at His circumcision, Who alone can lawfully circumcise our crime, together with Father and Holy Spirit.

To thy hands the magi bear gifts, three in number, which figure our life and the rule of faith.

To thee first did Christ teach the sorrowful glory of His kingdom: On thee did He bestow the first sign of His Godhead, when He made wine.

Therefore we pray that thou shouldst intercede in our defence before our Clement Parent, Who here on earth chose thee to be His parent, Whom the King of Heaven begat as King.

And we beg thee, now radiant in the presence of God, we beg thee with contrite heart, we beg and beseech thee, to watch over us, as once thou didst the resident of thy womb.

**For Twelfth Day
6th January**

[N.09] Festa Christi omnis

Let all Christendom celebrate Christ's feasts, which are adorned in marvellous wise and are venerable to all peoples through the Advent of the One Who keepeth all and the calling of the heathen!

When Christ was born, the magi beheld a bright star.

Now, thinking the glory of such a sign could not be in vain, they bear with them gifts for the little one, to offer to the King of Heaven Whom the star proclaimeth, and, passing by the golden bed of a swollen prince, to seek Christ's manger.

Thereupon the raging anger of fierce Herod, jealous against the new-born Ruler, biddeth the little ones of Bethlehem be slain by the cruel sword.

O Christ, how great an army dost Thou gather, learned even when young in the mightiest warfare, for the Father, proclaiming to the peoples, while Thou suckest at the breast among such wretched ones!

In the thirtieth year of His Manhood God had bowed Himself under the hands of His renowned servant, consecrating for us baptism for the remission of our crime.

Behold, the Spirit, under the form of an innocent bird, descendeth to anoint Him over all saints, contained ever within the mansion of His own breast!

There sounded also the reverend voice of the Father, heedless of the old pronouncement: It repenteth Me to have created Man: 'Truly, this is My Son, pleasing to Me, in Whom I am pleased. Today, My Son, have I begotten Thee.

Do ye, all peoples, listen to this Preacher!'

**For Candlemas Day
2nd February**

[N.10] Concertu parili hic

Here, with antiphonal song, thy people worshippeth thee, o Mary, and adoreth thee with pious hearts: thou, the worshipful daughter of high born Abraham, sprung from the royal stem of David.

Rejoice, o mother and noble virgin, who, trusting in the archangelic oracle of Gabriel, although unbroken, didst bear a Son, in Whose most sacred blood the whole of this most degenerate race is cleansed, as did promise God to Abraham!

Thee, o Mary, doth figure the barren rod of Aaron, with its fair flower, thou who bloomest without seed begotten of man.

Thou, o Mary, art the gate, ever barred, which Ezechiel's voice witnesseth: thou whom we believe God alone can penetrate.

Yet thou, although desiring to commend unto us the example of a mother of virtues, didst undergo the remedy that is ordained to mothers who are stained.

Thou didst carry with thee to the Temple, that He should be cleansed, the One Who, God become Man, did grant to thee the honour of wholeness, o mother that hast not been touched.

Rejoice thou, o holy Mary, that the Searcher of heart and reins findeth none but thee worthy to be His dwelling!

Exult, o Mary, that, when little, He did once smile upon thee, Who hath bestowed it upon all to rejoice and to exist at His nod!

Therefore, if we latecomers who keep the feast of the little Christ, made for our sake, and Mary's, His pious mother's, are not able to attain God's mighty humility, let His mother be our model!

Praise to the Father of Glory, Who, unveiling His Son to the gentiles and His people, joineth us to Israel!

Praise to His Son, Who, reconciling us with His blood to the Father, joineth us to the citizens of heaven!

Praise be also to the Holy Spirit forever!

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