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Notker Balbulus
The Hymnbook

The Common of the Saints
[N.39] – [N.44]

For Apostles

[N.39] Clare sanctorum senatus

O radiant Senate of the Holy Apostles, prince of the earth's sphere and ruler of kingdoms:
Govern thou the life and morals of the churches, which through thy teaching are faithful
allwhere!

Antiochus and Romus cede to thee, o Peter, the seat of the kingdom.

Thou, o Paul, didst break open Alexander's tyranny upon Greece.

The bristling Ethiops, o Matthew, didst thou clad in the shining wool of the Lamb that knoweth
not any stain.

O Thomas, Bartholomew, John, Philip, Simon and the two James, Andrew, Thaddaeus,
renowned warriors of God, look ye, east and west, indeed the world's smooth round rejoiceth
to have thee as its senators and looks to thee as its judges!

And thus, as suppliant, the whole world bestows on you praise and the honour that is due to
saints.

For Martyrs

[N.40] Agone triumphali militum

The victorious battle of the soldiers of the Highest King marketh this day for peoples that believe in this same King.

They had spurned the pleasure of worldly things and took up each day the cross once foul.

The savagery of none keepeth them from Christ, but rather they hasten to Him with a thousand deaths.

Not any prison nor any chain soften the breasts that are strong in Christ: nor do the dread bites of wild beasts hollow out the firm spirit of martyrs.

The sword that hangeth over the head scareth not the bravest soldiers of the Best Master.

Now inwith God's Hand they leap for delight upon the once cruel raging of their persecutors and offer to Christ's people a consolation amidst all the toils of this slippery age.

Ye who are the martyrs of Christ, be ye sure alway to commend us, that are exceeding frail, to the Just Judge with your earnest prayers!

O friends, let us exchange the warlike trumpet, which the fearless servants of God raise for wars that are drawn bristling against the twin enemy, for a trumpet of harmonious voice, and let us hymn in song those distinguished in virtues whom we cannot imitate in our sloth!

The enemy, multiform in his iniquity, attacked these athletes of the Highest God with deceitful blandishments to turn them from the truth.

But they, brandishing a heart raised to their Master, are prompt to break through the nets of the fierce fowler.

Then in his wrath the hidden foe spewed fiercely the force of his rage into the open and armed his limbs against the soldiers of God.

But they, conquering every sort of punishment, consecrated their heads to be laurelled by Christ the King.

O virgin, mother, why dost thou weep, beautiful Rachel, thou whose countenance delighteth Jacob?

As if the blear eyes of thy aged sister could please him!

Wipe thou, o mother, thy flowing eyes!

How do furrows in your cheeks become you? –

‘Alas, alas, alas, why do ye accuse me of shedding tears in vain?

Since I am deprived of a son, who alone would care for my poverty: Who would not cede to my enemy the narrow bounds that Jacob acquired for me: Who too would benefit his stolid brothers, whom, to my sorrow, I have raised in their numbers.’ –

Surely he is not to be wept, who hath acquired a heavenly kingdom?

And who, with frequent prayer, helpeth his wretched brothers before God?

King of Kings, our worshipful God!

Thou dost govern the soldiery of Christ by appointing those skilled in war for the dread battle, by giving consuls knowledgeable in the republic to be magistrates of Thy peoples.

For, wise in chusing, Thou art not deceived, o God, in whom Thou dost appoint to office.

Among whom that priest is sacred who, biding in the peace of Holy Church, hath taken counsel how he should have fortified against the assault of the enemy, which is wont often to befall the unwary.

That man, hateful to heretics and heathen, no less to the king of all that is ill, rejoices to hold a portion with the Lord, enduring His foes with Him.

Do thou, best provider, bestow on us alway the heavenly wheat of the Lord's teaching until, with abundant nourishment, we might return to our fatherland, o eminent soldier of God!

The ladder that is raised to the heavens, girded about by machines of torture, whose foot defendeth alway a dragon, careful to keep watch, lest anyone succeed to mount even its first step, whose ascent forbiddeth an Ethiop, threatening destruction with drawn sword, on whose head standeth a radiant youth, brandishing a branch of gold – this ladder Christ’s love hath opened to women, so that, trampling underfoot the dragon and passing the Ethiop’s sword, through every manner of torture, they might reach the peak of heaven and receive the laurel of gold from the hand of the King that comforteth.

What hath it profited thee, o unholy serpent, once to have deceived a woman, since a virgin hath born Lord Jesus, God the Father’s only and incarnate Son?

Who took from thee thy prey and pierceth thy cheek with a clasp, so that Eve’s children might escape, whom thou desirest to hold.

Now dost thou witness, o hateful one, virgins prevail over thee, and married women bear sons that are pleasing to God.

Now dost thou lament the constant faith of widows bereft of their husbands, thou who hadst persuaded a virgin to break faith to her Creator.

Now dost thou see women rise up as generals in war against thee, who urge on their sons to prevail over thy tortures with courage.

Rather the Lord cleanseth the whores that are thy vessels and deigneth to make them unto Himself a holy temple.

For these benefits let us now glorify the Lord together, both just and sinner, Who confirmeth the upright and reacheth out His right hand to the fallen, so that after our wickedness we might yet arise!

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