

**September 22**

**DEDICATION OF THE BASILICA OF MONTE SENARIO**

*From the common of the dedication of a church, except for the following.*

**Office of Readings**

**SECOND READING**

*Choose one of the following readings.*

From the Treatise on the Glory and Honour of the Son of Man by the venerable Gerhoh of Reichersberg, priest  
(Cap. X, 1-3: PL 194, 1105-1106)

*After Christ, Mary is the new beginning of the Church*

Christ's bride is the Church and each one of the faithful, just as the Father's bride was the Synagogue of old and every faithful person in it.

The Blessed Virgin Mary was the most eminent member of that ancient Synagogue and the Father loved her so greatly that he filled her with his love beyond all others and made her fruitful with his Word. The Word burst forth in her, for he was first conceived in her spirit and then in her body. The Word *proceeds as a bridegroom from his bridal chamber*, in love with the new Church, and in the Church with each one of the faithful as with *a bride adorned for her husband*. Among all brides the Blessed Virgin was adorned beyond all others. She is the achievement of the Synagogue, the most renowned daughter of the patriarchs, and, after her son, the new beginning of holy Church. She is the mother of the apostles, to one of whom Jesus said, *Behold your mother*.

What was said to one of the apostles could have been said to all of them for they are the fathers of the new Church. And because Christ prayed that all those who would believe because of their preaching might be one, what he said to the one disciple who loved him and was loved by him more than the others, can be applied to each faithful soul who loves Christ totally. While standing at the cross, the Blessed Mother gave birth to all the disciples. Knowing that her son was suffering to free and save them, she herself experienced pain when the sword of compassion pierced her soul so that she might bring them forth. It is not in vain, therefore, that we cry to her with hope, saying not only "Hail, Star of the Sea, kind Mother of God," but adding as well, "Show that you are indeed our Mother." She is mother in two ways: first, because she gave birth to her only son without pain, and then because in great pain and sorrow she gave birth for herself and her only son to many other children of his beloved disciple and the other disciples. The words of the Bridegroom can be fittingly understood as referring to this sorrow: *My soul is sorrowful unto death*.

Because of the lack of wine which gives joy to the heart, the Bridegroom said to this new bride, the early apostolic Church of which the Blessed Mother is a pre-eminent member: *A woman about to give birth is in sorrow because her hour has come and her sorrow will be turned into joy*. This is as if he had said "Your water will be turned to wine." For at that time the hour drew near in which by his passion and resurrection, his human and mortal nature, like the water of corruptibility, would be changed into the wine of immortality. When they had tasted this wine, the *disciples rejoiced at the sight of the Lord*.

Mary suffered more than the disciples in giving birth to humankind because of the sword of sorrow which pierced her soul. It is not surprising, therefore, that she rejoiced more at the sight of the Lord, her Son and Spouse, and experienced greater joy than that of the wedding guests, because of the taste of the wine of Christ's immortality. All those will be intoxicated by this wine who rise up transformed on the day of the universal wedding feast in which *we shall all indeed rise, but not all will be changed*.

**RESPONSORY** See Revelation 21:2, 23

V. I saw a new Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God,

R. beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her husband.

V. The city had no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God gave it light,

R. beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her husband.

*Alternative.*

*Come, let us view the place prepared by the Lord and go up to the mountain of the Lord*

The author of the *Legenda de origine Ordinis*, in describing the spiritual journey of the first seven Friar Servants of Saint Mary, tells of how important their solitude and isolation on Monte Senario were to them. When they arrived there sometime in 1245 or 1246, they seemed to have begun another stage of that journey which God had destined for them. Monte Senario indeed was a "mountain prepared by God and set aside by divine providence" for our Seven Fathers. The hagiographer describes the wonderful nature of the place as if he were viewing it through the eyes of the Seven Founders: a small and delightful level area on the top of the mountain, a spring of pure water and a grove so orderly that it looked as if it had been planted by hand. But he especially indicates the place as suitable to the purpose of the Seven Founders "as so removed from the dwellings of others that it was entirely suitable for those who wished to do penance on its summit." Seeing all this, the Seven hailed Monte Senario with the sacred and almost biblical title "mountain of the Lord." The author of the *Legenda* has them crying out: "Come, let us view the place prepared by the Lord and let us ascend to the mountain of the Lord, a place suitable for our life of penance." This ascent to the top of the mountain was, as it were, a sign and image of their spiritual ascent.

On the highest ridge of the mountain the Seven Holy Founders built for themselves a little house and they constructed a small church or oratory for praying and celebrating the divine mysteries. They dedicated the chapel to Saint Mary to show their devotion to the Mother of God, their glorious Lady, Advocate and Mediatrix. In the Servite Order the practice of dedicating churches to Saint Mary developed very quickly; we read in the *Constitutiones Antiquae*, "Every church of our Order and the main altar should be founded and consecrated in honour of Our Lady."

The story of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin on Monte Senario practically coincided with that of the sacred hermitage itself which twice was the site of spiritual renewal for the entire Order. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Congregation of the Observance was founded by some friars who had lived on Monte Senario. They intended to rekindle the original fervour of the Order.

In 1593, Clement VIII with the Bull *Decet Romanum Pontificem* canonically approved the Congregation of the Hermits of Monte Senario. The hermits flourished in Tuscany and Latium and were renowned for their virtue. In 1778, Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany, suppressed the Congregation of Hermits and the Priory of Monte Senario then returned to the common observance.

The humble church of Monte Senario, often damaged by inclement weather and age, was several times restored and enlarged through the efforts of the friars. Its title was also changed more than once: after being rebuilt, it was dedicated to the Assumption on 21 September 1621; restored and properly consecrated in 1717, it was dedicated to the Sorrowful Virgin and Saint Philip. In 1918 Benedict XV, with the Apostolic Letter *In Senario Monte*, raised the church to the dignity of a minor basilica. Every Servant of Mary considers Monte Senario a holy place and looks on it as the birth place and spiritual home of the Order. The basilica, containing the memory of the origins of the Order and the bodies of the Seven Founders, demonstrates to all Servites what kind of life theirs should be: austere and penitent, industrious and prayerful, hospitable and fraternal, hidden in God and solicitous of the needs of others.

The Basilica of Monte Senario and all the churches later dedicated to Saint Mary in the Order, remind Servites, by symbols and images, of a number of things: first of all, that they are dedicated to serving the Mother of Christ and that their life and apostolic activity are placed under the patronage of Our Lady; that all Servite churches should witness to the devotion of the Church and the Order

toward the Mother of God; finally, that Servites should make of themselves *a holy temple of God* just as the Virgin Mary, in accepting the word of the Lord in her immaculate heart and virginal womb, was made the exalted dwelling place of God.

### **RESPONSORY**

V. Filled with the fear of God and joy, our Seven Fathers said to one another: Come, let us see the place prepared by the Lord.

R. Let us ascend to the mountain of the Lord, a place suitable for penance.

V. Let us leave behind concerns so that we may fulfil the word of the Lord in all things.

R. Let us ascend to the mountain of the Lord, a place suitable for penance.

*Prayer, as in Morning Prayer.*

## **Morning Prayer**

### **HYMN**

*An appropriate hymn may be sung.*

*Psalms and antiphons are from the current weekday.*

### **READING** Isaiah 56:7

Them I will bring to my holy mountain and make joyful in my house of prayer; Their holocausts and sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar, For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

### **RESPONSORY**

V. The Lord has sanctified his tabernacle. The temple of the Lord is holy.

R. The Lord has sanctified his tabernacle. The temple of the Lord is holy.

V. This is the tabernacle of God among us.

R. The temple of the Lord is holy.

V. Glory to the Father . . .

R. The Lord has sanctified ...

### **CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH**

Ant. May you shine with wonderful light, like the temple of the living God placed on the mountaintop.

### **INTERCESSIONS**

Celebrating our Saviour who was born of the womb of the Virgin and who was the temple in which dwelled the fullness of the divinity, let us pray, saying:

*Remember your Church, O Lord.*

Saviour of the world, by virtue of your redemption, you preserved Your Mother Mary from every sin;

- keep us free from sin.

Redeemer of the world, you made the Virgin Mary the vessel of your incarnation and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit;

- make us enduring temples of your Spirit.

Our priest, you desired that your Mother Mary stand near your cross;

- may we, too, be willing to share in your sufferings.

King of kings, you wined that your Mother Mary be assumed into heaven, body and soul;

- direct our thoughts to you.

Lord of heaven and earth, you gave the Blessed Virgin Mary to us as an example and faithful witness of service;

-grant that today each of us may serve you and all peoples.

*(Joined together as were the Mother of Jesus and the apostles, let us conclude our petitions by saying with one voice the prayer of the Lord:)*

Our Father ...

### **PRAYER**

Father in heaven, the whole world is the temple of your glory, but you invite us to worship your presence in sacred buildings. May we, who remember the dedication of the Basilica of the Servants at Monte Senario, renew our hearts to worship you in spirit and in truth, here and everywhere. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

### **Evening Prayer**

### **CANTICLE OF MARY**

Ant. In your dwelling place, O Lord of life, our eyes are filled with your beauty, our hearts are opened to your wisdom and our minds are illumined with your goodness.