

# Christian Platonism

Rediscovering Ancient Wisdom

## Adam of St. Victor – Sequences

[leave a comment »](#)



*The Forerunners of Christ with Saints and Martyrs, Fra Angelico, 1423-1424, National Gallery, London*

**THE ABBEY OF ST. VICTOR** outside of Paris during the 12th and 13th centuries produced several noteworthy figures in the history of Christian spirituality, including Hugh and Richard of St. Victor and Thomas Gallus. The high achievements of the Victorines in the area of contemplation did not occur in isolation, but rather in an integral context that included such things as regular participation in the Mass and Catholic sacramental life. A lesser known figure, Adam of St. Victor, a contemporary of Hugh, left us many examples of Latin Sequences that were sung during daily masses there. Studying these helps give us some insight into the spiritual milieu of the Abbey. The poetic quality of Adam's Sequences is somewhat variable, but here are two gems: the first for All Saints Day, and the second for the commemoration day of St. Augustine. The English translations of Wrangham are shown; newer translations have recently been made by Mousseau.

# All Saints Day

November 1

## CIII

THE Church on earth those joys pourtrays,  
Which heavenly Mother-Church displays;  
Keeping her annual holydays,  
For endless ones she sighs and prays.

SUPERNAE matris gaudia  
Repraesentat Ecclesia:  
Dum festa colit annua,  
Suspirat ad perpetua.

In this dark vale of woe to-day, 5  
That Mother must her daughter stay;  
Here Angel-guardians' bright array  
Must stand beside us in the fray.

In hac valle miseriae 5  
Mater succurrat filiae;  
Hie coelestes excubiae  
Nobiscum stent in acie.

The world, the flesh, the devil's spite  
By different methods wars excite: 10  
Such countless phantoms' rush destroys  
The sabbath that the heart enjoys.

Mundus, caro, daemonia  
Diversa movent praelia: 10  
Incursu tot phantasmatum  
Turbatur cordis sabbatum.

This evil kindred hate displays  
Alike against all holydays.  
As, one and all, they fight and strive 15  
Peace from the face of earth to drive.

Dies festos cognatio  
Simul haec habet odio  
Certatque pari foedere 15  
Pacem de terra tollere.

Things strangely mingle here below,  
Hope, terror, happiness, and pain;  
While scarce for half an hour, we know.  
Is silence kept in heaven's domain. 20

Confusa sunt hie omnia,  
Spes, metus, moeror, gaudium:  
Vix hora vel dimidia  
Fit in coelo silentium. 20

How blest that city is, wherein  
Unceasing feast-days still begin!  
How happy that assembly, where  
Is utter ignorance of care!

Quam felix illa civitas  
In qua jugis solemnitas!  
Et quam jocunda curia,  
Quae curae prorsus nescia!

Nor languor here, nor age, they know, 25  
Nor fraud, nor terror of a foe:  
But with one voice their joy they show;  
One ardour makes all hearts to glow.

Nec languor hic, nec senium, 25  
Nec fraus, nec terror hostium,  
Sed una vox laetantium,  
Et unus ardor cordium.

The angel-citizens on high  
There, 'neath a triple hierarchy, 30  
The Trinity in Unity  
Serve and obey rejoicingly.

Illic cives angelici  
Sub hierarchia triplici 30  
Trinae gaudent et simplici  
Se Monarchiae subjici.

With wonder, — never giving o'er! —  
They, seeing Him whom they adore,  
Enjoy what, craving as before, 35  
They thirst but to enjoy the more.

Mirantur, nec deficiunt,  
In ilium quem prospiciunt;  
Fruuntur, nec fastidiunt, 35  
Quo frui magis sitiunt.

There all the Fathers stand around,  
Ranking as worthy they are found;  
The darkness now removed of night,  
In light they look upon the light. 40

Illic patres dispositi  
Pro qualitate meriti,  
Semota jam caligine,  
Lumen vident in lumine. 40

These Saints, whose feast to-day we grace  
With solemn service as of old,  
The King, unveiled and face to face,  
In all His glory now behold.

Hi sancti quorum hodie  
Recensentur solemnia,  
Nunc, revelata facie,  
Regem cernunt in gloria.

There may the virgins' queen, in light 45  
Transcending far heaven's orders bright,  
Plead our excuses in God's sight  
For all our failures to do right.

Illic regina virginum, 45  
Transcendens culmen ordinum,  
Excuset apud Dominum  
Nostrorum lapsus criminum.

When this life's troubles all are past,  
Through prayer by them to God addressed. 50  
May Christ's grace bring us at the last  
To where the Saints in glory rest! Amen.

Nos ad sanctorum gloriam,  
Per ipsorum suffragia, 50  
Post praesentem miseriam  
Christi perducatur gratia! Amen.

*Source:* Wrangham, vol. 3, pp. 170–175.

## St. Augustine



*Scenes from the Life of Saint Augustine of Hippo, ca. 1490, Master of Saint Augustine, Netherlandish, Metropolitan Museum of Art*

August 28

**LXVIII**

OUR tuneful strains let us upraise  
That endless feast's delights to praise,  
When, since thereon no trouble weighs,  
The heart observes true sabbath days;

AETERNI festi gaudia  
Nostra sonet harmonia,  
Quo mens in se pacifica  
Vera frequentat sabbata;

The rapture of a conscience clear, 5  
That perfumes all those joys sincere,  
By which it hath rich foretaste here  
Of saints' unending glory there,

Mundi cordis laetitia 5  
Odorans vera gaudia,  
Quibus praegustat avida  
Quae sit sanctorum gloria,

Where the celestial company  
Joys in its home exultingly; 10  
And, giving crowns, their King they see  
In all his glorious majesty.

Qua laetatur in patria  
Coelicolarum curia, 10  
Regem donantem praemia  
Sua cernens in gloria.

O happy land! how great its bliss,  
That knoweth nought but happiness!  
For all the dwellers on that shore 15  
One ceaseless song of praise outpour;

Beata illa patria  
Quae nescit nisi gaudia!  
Nam cives hujus patriae 15  
Non cessant laudes canere.

Who those delights' full sweetness feel,  
Which not a trace of grief conceal;  
'Gainst whom no foeman draws the steel,  
And who beneath no tempest reel: 20

Quos ille dulcor afficit  
Quern nullus moeror inficit;  
Quos nullus hostit impetit  
Nullusque turbo concutit; 20

Where one day, clear from cloudlet's haze,  
Is better than a thousand days;  
Bright with true light's transcendent rays;  
Filled with that knowledge of God's ways,

Ubi dies clarissima  
Melior est quam millia,  
Luce lucens praefulgida,  
Plena Dei notitia;

To grasp which human reason fails, 25  
Nor human tongue to tell avails.  
Till this mortality shall be  
Absorbed in that life's victory;

Quam mens humana capere, 25  
Nec lingua valet promere,  
Donec vitae victoria  
Commutet haec mortalia.

When God shall all in all appear,  
Life, righteousness, and knowledge clear; 30  
Victuals and vesture and whate'er  
The pious mind would wish to share!

Quando Deus est omnia:  
Vita, virtus, scientia, 30  
Victus, vestis et caetera,  
Quae velle potest mens pia!

This in this vale of misery  
The sober mind's chief thought should be;  
This should it feel, while rest it takes, 35  
This should be with it when it wakes;

Hoc in hac valle misera  
Meditetur mens sobria;  
Hoc per soporem sentiat, 35  
Hoc attendat dum vigilat;

How it will in that home, — its days  
Of earthly exile past, — fond lays  
For ever, crowned, the King to praise  
In all His glorious beauty, raise. 40

Quo mundi post exilia  
Coronetur iu patria,  
Ac in decoris gloria  
Regem laudet per saecula. 40

These praises, sounding loud and clear,  
The Church now imitateth here;  
As, in due order, year by year,  
The birthdays of her saints appear;

Harum laudum praeconia  
Imitatur Ecclesia,  
Dum recensentur annua  
Sanctorum natalitia;

When, after they have fought their fight, 45  
With worth-won honours they are dight;  
The martyr crowned with roses bright;  
The virgin clad in robes of white.

Cum post peracta praelia 45  
Digna redduntur praemia  
Pro passione rosea,  
Pro castitate candida.

They too receive a golden chain,  
Who doctrines Catholic maintain: 50  
In which Augustine now doth reign.  
One of the great King's shining train;

Datur et torques aurea  
Pro doctrina catholica: 50  
Qua praefulget Augustinus  
In summi regis curia.

Whose written volumes' full array  
Are now the one Faith's strength and stay:  
Hence Mother Church avoids the way 55  
Where errors lead mankind astray.

Cujus librorum copia  
Fides firmatur unica;  
Hinc et mater Ecclesia 55  
Vitat errorum devia.

To follow where his steps precede,  
And preach the truths He taught indeed.  
Mother! may grace thy servants lead,  
And grant the pure warm faith we need! Amen. 60

Hujus sequi vestigia  
Ac praedicare dogmata  
Fide recta ac fervida,  
Det nobis mater gratia! Amen. 60

*Source:* Wrangham, vol. 2, pp. 186–191.

## Readings

Blune, Clemens; Dreves, Guido Maria; Bannister, Henry K. *Thesauri Hymnologici Prosarium.*(*Analecta Hymnica* LIII, LIV, and LV), Leipzig, 1911, 1915, 1922. Latin text critical editions.



Fassler, Margot E. Who was Adam of Saint Victor? The evidence of the Sequence manuscripts. *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 37, 1984, 233–269.

Fassler, Margot E. The Victorines and the medieval liturgy. In: Eds. Hugh Feiss & Juliet Mousseau, A Companion to the Abbey of Saint Victor in Paris. Brill, 2018; 389-421.

Grosfillier, Jean. *Les séquences d'Adam de Saint-Victor: étude littéraire (poétique et rhétorique), textes et traductions, commentaries.* Bibliotheca Victorina 20. Turnhout: Brepols, 2008; 773–784.

Mousseau, Juliet. Adam of St Victor: Sequences. Introduction. In: Eds. Boyd Taylor Coolman & Dale M. Coulter, *Trinity and Creation: a selection of works of Hugh, Richard and Adam of St Victor* (VTT 1), New City Press, 2011; pp. 181–184. Latin text and English translations.

Mousseau, Juliet. Adam of St Victor: Sequences. Peeters, 2013.

Neale, John Mason (ed.). *Mediæval Hymns and Sequences.* 3rd ed. London, 1867; pp.128–130 (Supernæ Matris Gaudia).

Shigo, Marie B. Study of the sequences ascribed to Adam of St. Victor. Dissertation. Loyola University Chicago, 1954.

Wrangham, Digby S. (ed.). *The liturgical poetry of Adam of St. Victor.* 3 vols. London, 1881. Latin and English. vol. 1, vol. 2, vol. 3.



Written by John Uebersax

September 7, 2021 at 3:44 pm

Posted in Mass, prayer, Roman Catholicism

Tagged with Adam of St. Victor, liturgical prayers, medieval, Sequence, Victorines

**Create a free website or blog at WordPress.com.**