

Devotion on Hymns of the Church - Hymn 610 – *Venite, Exultemus Domino* – 15 November 2017, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



O SING unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. 2 Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. 3 Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. 4 For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. 5 For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens. 6 Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. 7 Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. 8 Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. 9 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. 10 Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. 11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. 12 Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice 13 Before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth. (Psalm 96:1-13)

One of the most spiritually impressive features of 'traditional' Anglican worship is the profusion of Scripture reading involved with every facet of worship, whether Daily Morning/Evening Prayer, Holy Communion, Matrimony, or Burial Services. If the Church abides, as it must if it will be Reformed, by the Prayer Book Lectionary (1928, 1962, or 1662), it will observe regular biblical readings from the Psalms, Old Testament, Gospel and Epistles every day or week. The words of the grand text of Holy Scripture from the Received Text Bibles inspires faith and devotion. When I was young, every service involved readings from the King James Bible and, since everyone had the same Bible, there was no confusion of meaning or verse.

Today, you will be hard put to determine which verse of the Bible is being read, if any at all, in modern churches that have complacently allowed themselves to be deceived

by the wicked men who love lucre more than righteousness. The modern church is mostly led by those men to which 2 Timothy makes reference: “*1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, 7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*” (2 Tim 3:1-7) Ladies, do not be offended by the term ‘silly women’ since the characteristic of silliness is found with abundance among the male populace as well. Some men today are more effeminate than are our wonderful ladies many of whom are far more solemn than our men.

When I first attended a regular Morning Prayer Service at St. Peter’s Anglican Orthodox Church in Statesville in 1995, I felt like I had returned to a previous and more Godly age in my life experiences. The *Venite, Exultemus Domino* awoke memories of the Morning Prayer Services I had witnessed regularly at the Protestant Chapel at the US Military Academy at West Point. Though it was performed with greater sophistication at the Academy, the version I heard at St. Peter’s seemed closer to the heart and soul. Instead of the largest church organ in the world (at West Point), a portable organ was used at St. Peter’s in those days, but with greater spiritual intensity.

The *Venite* is a canticle based on the 96th Psalm and is actually a paraphrase of the meaning of it. The rubric authorizes the substitution of the 95th Psalm if occasion suggests it. It reinforces the attitude with which we should approach the worship of a Holy God. The *Venite* was the battle hymn of the Knights Templar during the Crusades.

Our reverence before God should begin long before we enter the place of worship. We should, every morning, awaken to the reality that this day is a gift of God and that we owe Him praise and thanksgiving for giving it. But, most certainly, when we enter the church foyer and sanctuary, we should do so with humility and quietness and in contemplation of the feast of Heavenly Bread that we are about to be fed from God’s Holy Word. Our first act, once seated, should be to engage in quiet prayer that God’s Word will sink into the fertile sinews of our heart and bear fruit. If we only attend church once per week, could we not be silent at least for 52 hours out to the year to the glory of God? That would leave (in a year of 365 days) 8,708 hours to gossip, converse and socialize with friends, and do our daily labors in that same year – not even a tithe of our time dedicated to the reverent worship of the Lord. Actually, less than 1% of the hours we have in a year.

The canticle concludes, as required by the Prayer Book rubric, with the *Gloria Patri*. It is a chant sung to a tune by E.F. Rimbault. I will forego an elaboration on the meaning of each line since it is self-explanatory in plain language of Holy Scripture.

The Venite, Exultemus Domino (#610 in 1940 Hymnal)

*O Come Let us sing unto the | Lord; Let us heartily rejoice in the strength of | our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanks | giving; and show ourselves | glad in him with psalms.
For the Lord is a great | God; and a great King | above all gods.
In his hand are all the corners of the | earth; and the strength of hills | is his also.*

*The sea is his and he | made it; and his hands prepar | ed the dry land.
O come let us worship and fall | down; and kneel before the | Lord our Maker.
For he is the Lord our | God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the | sheep of his hand.
O worship the Lord in the beauty of | holiness; let the whole earth | stand in awe of him.
For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the | earth; and with righteousness to judge the world, and
the | peoples with his truth.*

*Glory be to the Father and to the | Son, and | to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever | shall be, world | without end. Amen.*

Instead of adopting the fast-foods approach of modern churches in worship, perhaps we should take note of the testimony of the great Reformers such as Cranmer, Luther, Hus, Calvin, Latimer, and Ridley – in returning to the understanding of the Apostolic Fathers in practicing a studied and biblical approach to worship that has been certified by the martyrdom of many saints and the faith and doctrine believed by the Church from its inception, and in all ages?