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 fraud, 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 crimine.

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 misericordiam
Christi perducat gratia! Amen.


St. Augustine
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


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Written by John Uebersax

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