

# THERE TRULY WERE MANY PRIESTS

## The Feast of Saints Vedast and Amandus

### THE COLLECT

O God, You surround and shield us by the glorious witness of Your confessors Vedast and Amandus; grant, we beseech thee, for us to be made better by imitating them, and happier by their intercession, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

### THE EPISTLE

**The Epistle text is found in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Book of the Hebrews, beginning at the 23<sup>rd</sup> verse.**

And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up himself.

### THE GOSPEL

**The Gospel text is found in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke, beginning at the 35<sup>th</sup> verse**

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

## THERE TRULY WERE MANY PRIESTS

✠ *I speak to you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

In our Epistle text, which is found in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Book of the Hebrews, we find these words:

And there truly were many priests, because they were not permitted to continue their priesthood because they had died.

Now there have been in fact many, many priests from the time of Moses and Aaron until this very day.

And all but a tiny fraction have left behind no trace, no memory, not even a name, perhaps remembered by God alone, as the author of this epistle writes but one chapter earlier

For God is not unrighteous to forget [their] work and labour of love, which [they] have shown towards His name, in that [they] have ministered to the saints, and do yet minister to this day.<sup>1</sup>

The pair of priests that we honour today with our feast are but two of all those priests, who themselves are all but forgotten save in Flanders fields in the mists of 1500 years now past. Perhaps even forever completely forgotten save in one or two parish churches in Flanders and in England, save for one fact:

That they managed to get themselves a spot on the liturgical calendar of the Sarum Rite, which was the rite common in that area as well as in England, and in the Dominican rite to this day, as I understand it. And as this is the rite that we employ this morning, we are now charged with continuing their remembrance unto a new generation.

However, as it would be too much to speak of both in the time tolerated in this impatient day and age, we will speak alone of Saint Vedast.



**The stature of St. Vedast in the Church of St. Vedast in Wambrechies (Lille), France**

St. Vedast himself has a church so named for him which is now in a suburb of the city of Lille, which is more or less halfway between Ypres and Mons, names of places chistled into countless monuments across Canada where many of the 66,000 Canadian men-at-arms fell and are buried just over a century ago. It was at Ypres where those gallant Canadians were the first to breath the gas.

During the time of Vedast which was at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, his people, the Franks who had come some time before to occupy the entire Rhine delta, had now come to invest the regions to the south and west into what is now northeastern France. Their language was the ancestor of modern Dutch and Flemish, and what would happen in this century was their conquest of the entirety of half of Western Europe.

We hear and read much nowadays about the Council of Nicea in 325, and today we continue recite its child, the Nicene Creed.

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 6:10

**Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem caeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium.**

**Et in unum Dominum Iesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum, et ex Patre natum, ante omnia saecula, Deum de Deo, lumen de Lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero, genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri: per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis. Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato; passus et sepultus est, et resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas, et ascendit in caelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria, iudicare vivos et mortuos, cuius regni non erit finis.**

**Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem: qui ex Patre Filioque procedit. Qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur: qui locutus est per prophetas. Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptismum in remissionem peccatorum. Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.**

I BELIEVE in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God; Begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God; Begotten, not made; Being of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made: Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man: And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried: And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures: And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of the Father: And he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord, and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spake by the Prophets: And I believe one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church: I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins: And I look for the Resurrection of the dead: And the Life of the world to come. Amen.

However, the heresy that it addressed and to which we refer as the Arian heresy, was still alive and well now only 175 years later in western Europe and prevalent among especially the Gothic and other Germanic tribes that had moved into and settled throughout Western Europe from Spain to Constantinople.

In brief, Arianism denies root and branch the doctrine of the Trinity, insisting that the Son was not of one co-eternal substance with the Father. *Deum de Deo, lumen de Lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero, genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri: per quem omnia facta sunt.* God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father

It follows from this that the Arians and their ilk deny that God entered Himself into the finite world, or that as a result He continues to be seen and known and accessible to us.

In the Nicene teaching, God becomes knowable directly to us on His throne as well as in the world around us in nature. The notion is that God created the universe subject to law and

from that the notion follows that through the study of nature, we might discover these laws and thereby come to know the Mind of God.

Today, many scientists and historians of science have come to the conclusion that modern science as we know it could only have arisen in a catholic Europe.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, without Nicea, there would be no universities, no Copernicus, no Bacon, no Newton, no Gallileo, no Madame Curie, no Einstein.

Now one of the enemies of the Franks was the Burgundians to the south. And they were Arians.

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<sup>2</sup> In a famous series of lectures at Harvard University in 1924, famous mathematician Alfred North Whitehead argued that modern science as we know it, as distinct from engineering, could only have arisen in a catholic Europe. Hence without the survival of Nicene Christianity, there would have been no universities, no Copernicus, no Bacon, no Newton, no Gallileo, no Madame Curie, no Einstein.

But the king of the Burgundians had a beautiful daughter named Clothilda who had a mother and teachers who had instructed her in the catholic or Nicene religion.

As a means to cool animosities and appease the Franks, Clothilda was married off to the new King of the Franks named Clovis. Clovis himself at the time remained a pagan according to the ancient traditions of the Franks.



**THE MARRIAGE OF CLOTHILDA AND CLOVIS** From **CLOVIS 1<sup>er</sup> ET SA FAMILLE. Grandes Chroniques de France, XIV<sup>ème</sup> siècle. fr. 73, fol. 13v.**

Clothilda attempted to convert her husband, and eventually extracted a promise from him to convert if he were successful in his upcoming big battle with the Arian-minded Bavarian tribes.

Since the Bavarians were the upper dogs in this match, he figured what could he lose?

However, when he was successful in battle, he honoured his pledge, and agreed to be baptized before being crowned in Reims.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A similar story is that of Bertha, the daughter of one of the Frankish kings who succeeded Clovis. She was married off to Ethelbert, the ruler of the Saxons in England, and converted him to Christianity and he proceeded to establish the new English church at Canterbury. This encouraged the first Pope Gregory to send Augustine from Rome as a missionary and in 597

As this event was now but a week or two away, a priest would have to be found to teach him the catechism on his way there.

This onerous task would fall upon Father Vedast.

Tradition acknowledges that Father Vedast was eventually consecrated a bishop, but perhaps never had his own see.

We can only surmise that he was at the time but a humble catechist who landed a plum job for no other reason than he was available. He learned that it was really just that simple: you don't need a plan or a to do list, you only have to make yourself available.

His clear and simple teaching of this new king reverberates to this day throughout England and France. The descendants and successors of Clovis to the French crown would staunchly maintain the catholic faith through the ages and defeat the many heretics who one way or the other denied the absolute freedom of the will founded in the Laws of Moses or who endorsed any form of fatalism or who denied God the unfettered and unobstructed ability "to save all those who come to God through Christ", whether those heretics came invading from Spain or from Switzerland or the Lowlands.<sup>4</sup>

What would be the teaching of Father Vedast offered to King Clovis on such short notice?

No doubt Clovis's day on the way to Reims was filled with the review of battle reports, lists of casualties, and how to administer the newly gained territory to the south.

How much actual face time would he be allowed with his catechumen?

Perhaps his mind turned to our epistle text for this morning.

And why not? Should not our message meet the seeker where they are? In this regard the whole passage of Hebrews chapter 7 makes perfect sense.

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he became the first Archbishop of Canterbury and head of the new church.

<sup>4</sup> Referring to (1) the Muslim invaders defeated at Tours in 732 by Charles Martel, (2) the Calvinist Huguenots originating in Switzerland, and (3) the Jansenists in the Lowlands.

A great king returns victorious in battle over his temporal foes, and is met by a mysterious priest named Melchizedek, whose name means either King of Righteousness or My King is Righteous, as we read in the text following:

For this Melchizedek, the King of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham as he returned from the slaughter of the kings, and he blessed him. In return, Abraham gave him his tithe of all his booty, him being the King of Righteousness and later referred to as King of Salem, or Peace. He had no father, no mother, no descent, nor beginning of days, nor end of life, but was a type of the Son of God, and remained a priest continually.

Consider now, [King Clovis Fr. Vedast went on], how really superior this man Melchizedek was, unto whom even the great Patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of all his spoils.<sup>5</sup>

*Thus, Fr Vedast went on, such is our Christ to your kingship. He was there before you and will be there long after you are gone and your descendants as well. To this eternal Priest you owe your fealty and your kingdom. We priests, too, will all be gone, and no doubt less remembered than great kings.*

*But this Man Jesus, because He lives forever, has an immutable and unchangeable priesthood.*

*And for this reason, long after you and I part, He will remain accessible to you and will be able to save you in the utmost extreme, and not just you, but any one, king or pauper, who comes to God through Him, seeing that He lives forever to make intercession for all who so come to Him.*

This is because this High Priest became one of us, Who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, and Who is unlike those other priests, who first offer up daily sacrifice for their own sins, and then afterwards for the people's sins, because He Himself did this once and for all when He offered up Himself.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 7:1-4

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 7:23-28



**THE BAPTISM OF KING CLOVIS from CLOVIS 1<sup>er</sup> ET SA FAMILLE. Grandes Chroniques de France, XIV<sup>ème</sup> siècle. fr. 73, fol. 13v.**

When Fr Vedast woke up before dawn that fateful morning and was praying his office, he had no idea that the service he would perform over the next week would result in the baptizing in the true and Apostolic catholic faith of the patriarch of all French kings for the next 1500 years as well as the baptism of over 3,000 souls at the upcoming coronation in Reims, to say nothing of how it would change the history of the world as we know it to this very day.

He only prayed that God would bless him to show him that person to whom God wanted to have a word that day and to give him only those words that God Himself wanted to speak to that person.

My friends, what you do and what you say as you go out from here may not change the world, but it has been taught from the most ancient times that anyone who preserves a single life is as if he had preserved an entire world.<sup>7</sup> And

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<sup>7</sup> *Therefore man was created single in the world to teach that for anybody who destroys a single life it is counted as if he destroyed an entire world, **and for anybody who preserves a single life it is counted as if he preserved an entire world.** And because of peace among men, that nobody could say to another, my father was greater than your father. And that sectarians could not say, there are a plurality of powers in Heaven. And to proclaim the greatness of the King over kings of kings, the Holy One, praise to Him. For a man coins many coins with one die; they are one like the other. But the King over kings of kings, the Holy One,*

the amazing thing is that all you have to do ask Him to show you.

Blessed are those Servants, whom the Lord when He comes shall find them alert and watching: truly I say to you, that the Lord shall gird Himself, and make all of them sit down to eat, and will come forth and serve them.

In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.  
Amen ✠

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*praise to Him, stamps every man with the stamp of the first man, but no one is like any other. Therefore, everybody is required to say, the world was created for me. Maybe you will say, why should we go to all this trouble? There already is written: If he is a witness, or saw, or knew, etc. Maybe you will say, why should we be guilty of this man's blood? There already is written: In destruction of evildoers is clamor. From the Mishna quoted in the Jerusalem Talmud.*