



The Blessing of the Bonfire

on the Vigil of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist

Benedictio Rogi in Vigilia Nativitatis S. Ioannis Baptistæ

from the Roman Ritual — the Eve of Saint John, XXIII June

On the eve of the feast the wood is laid in a fitting place. The priest, vested in surplice and stole, comes before the unlit fire with the people, and begins:

✠ **Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini.**

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

✠ **Qui fecit cælum et terram.**

Who made heaven and earth.

✠ **Dominus vobiscum.**

The Lord be with you.

✠ **Et cum spiritu tuo.**

And with thy spirit.

Oremus. — Let us pray.

Lord God, almighty Father, the light that never fails and the source of all light, sanctify ✠ this new fire, and grant that after the darkness of this life we may come unsullied to you who are light eternal; through Christ our Lord.

✠ **Amen.**

The fire is sprinkled with holy water; after which the clergy and the people sing the following hymn.

Hymnus — Ut queant laxis

Latin attr. Paul the Deacon, VIII c. — English: the Hymner, after W. J. Blew

Ut queant laxis resonare fibris
Mira gestorum famuli tuorum,
Solve polluti labii reatum,
Sancte Iohannes.

*O for thy Spirit, Holy John, to chasten,
Lips sin-polluted, fettered tongues to loosen,
So by thy children might thy deeds of
wonder
Meetly be chaunted.*

Núntius celso véniens Olýmpo
Te patri magnum fore nascitúrum,
Nomen et vitæ sériem geréndæ
Órdine promit.

Ille promíssi dúbius supérni,
Péridit promptæ módulos loquélæ:
Sed reformásti génius perémpat
Órgana vocis.

Ventris obstrúso récubans cubíli
Sénseras Regem thálamó manéntem:
Hinc parens nati méritis utérque
Abdita pandit.

Sit decus Patri, genitæque Proli,
Et tibi, compar utriúsque virtus,
Spíritus semper, Deus unus, omni
Témporis ævo. Amen.

*Lo! a swift herald, from the skies
descending,
Bears to thy father promise of thy greatness;
How he shall name thee, what thy future
story,
Duly revealing.*

*Scarcely believing message so transcendent,
Him for a season power of speech
forsaketh,
Till, at thy wondrous birth, again returneth
Voice to the voiceless.*

*Thou, in thy mother's womb all darkly
cradled,
Knewest thy Monarch, bidding in his
chamber,
Whence the two parents, through their
children's merits,
Mysteries utter'd.*

*Praise to the Father, to the Son begotten,
And to the Spirit, equal power possessing,
One God whose glory, through the lapse of
ages,
Ever resounding. Amen.*

✠ Fuit homo missus a Deo.
There was a man sent from God.

✠ Cui nomen erat Ioánnes.
Whose name was John.

Oremus. — Let us pray.

O God, Who hast made this day worthy of honour by the birth of blessed John: grant to Thy people the grace of spiritual joys, and direct the minds of all the faithful into the way of everlasting salvation. Through our Lord.

✠ Amen.



The Canticle of Zachary

Benedictus — Luke I. 68–79

It is fitting, while the fire burns, that the company recite the Canticle of Zachary, father of the Forerunner, who foretold that his son would enlighten them that sit in darkness. The verses may be divided between two choirs.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; because he hath visited and wrought the redemption of his people:

And hath raised up an horn of salvation to us, in the house of David his servant:

As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, who are from the beginning:

Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us:

To perform mercy to our fathers, and to remember his holy testament,

The oath, which he swore to Abraham our father, that he would grant to us,

That being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we may serve him without fear,

In holiness and justice before him, all our days.

And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways:

To give knowledge of salvation to his people, unto the remission of their sins:

Through the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient from on high hath visited us:

To enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death: to direct our feet into the way of peace.

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.

A note for the household

Where no priest is present, the head of the household may lead the rite, omitting only the sign of the cross over the fire, which is reserved to the ordained. All else — the versicles, the prayer, the hymn, the Canticle, and the collect — may be said or sung by the family together.



Texts of the rite after The Roman Ritual, tr. Philip T. Weller (Bruce, 1964). The hymn: Latin attr. Paul the Deacon (VIII c.); English a cento from The Hymner (after W. J. Blew, 1852–55). The collect in the traditional translation (Dom Guéranger, The Liturgical Year). Canticle in the Douay–Rheims. Versicle responses in the received English. Rubrics editorial.