

directing preachers to encourage the people to say Hail Marys when the Complin bell rang. Moreover, these indications are strongly confirmed by certain inscriptions still to be read on some few bells of the thirteenth century. Further back than this direct testimonials do not go; but on the other hand we read in the "Regularis Concordia", a monastic rule composed by St. Aethelwold of Winchester, c. 975, that certain prayers called the *tres orationes*, preceded by psalms, were to be said after Complin as well as before Matins and again at Prime, and although there is no express mention of a bell being rung after Complin, there is express mention of the bell being rung for the *tres orationes* at other hours. This practice, it seems, is confirmed by German examples (Mart ne, De Antiq. Eccles. Ritibus, IV, 39), and as time went on it became more and more definitely associated with three separate peals of the bell, more especially at Bec, at St. Denis, and in the customs of the Canon Regular of St. Augustine (e.g. at Barnwell Priory and elsewhere). We have not in these earlier examples any mention of the Hail Mary (q.v.), which in England first became familiar as an antiphon in the Little Office of Our Lady about the beginning of the eleventh century (The Month. November, 1901), but it would be the most natural thing in the world that once the Hail Mary had become an everyday prayer, this should for the laity take the place of the more elaborate *tres orationes* recited by the monks; just as in the case of the Rosary, one hundred and fifty Hail Marys were substituted for the one hundred and fifty psalms of the Psalter. Moreover, in the Franciscan decree of St. Bonaventure's time, referred to above, this is precisely what we find, viz., that the laity in general were to be induced to say Hail Marys when the bell rang at Complin, during, or more probably after, the office of the friars. A special appropriateness for these greetings of Our Lady was found in the belief that at this very hour she was saluted by the angel. Again, it is noteworthy that some monastic customs in speaking of the *tres orationes* expressly prescribe

the observance of the rubric about standing or kneeling according to the season, which rubric is insisted upon in the recitation of the Angelus to this day. From this we may conclude that the Angelus in its origin was an imitation of the monks' night prayers and that it had probably nothing directly to do with the curfew bell, rung as a signal for the extinction of fires and lights. The curfew, however, first meets us in Normandy in 1061 and is then spoken of as a bell, which summoned the people to say their prayers, after which summons they should not again go abroad. If anything, therefore, it seems more probable that the curfew was grafted upon this primitive prayer-bell rather than vice versa. If the curfew and the Angelus coincided at a later period, as apparently they did in some cases, this was probably accidental.

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Pamphlet 015

Angelus

Present Usage

The Angelus is a short practice of devotion in honor of the Incarnation repeated three times each day, morning, noon, and evening, at the sound of the bell. It consists essentially in the triple repetition of the Hail Mary, to which in later times have been added three introductory versicles and a concluding versicle and prayer. The prayer is that which belongs to the antiphon of Our Lady, "Alma Redemptoris," and its recitation is not of strict obligation in order to gain the indulgence. From the first word of the three versicles, i.e. *Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariæ* (The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary), the devotion derives its name. The indulgence of 100 days for each recitation, with a plenary once a month was granted by Benedict XIII, 14 September, 1724, but the conditions prescribed have been somewhat modified by Leo XIII, 3 April, 1884. Originally it was necessary that the Angelus should be said kneeling (except on Sundays and on Saturday evenings, when the rubrics prescribe a standing posture), and also that it should be said at the sound of the bell; but more recent legislation allows these conditions to be dispensed with for any sufficient reason, provided the prayer be said approximately at the proper hours, i.e. in the early morning, or about the hour of noon, or towards evening. In this case, however, the whole Angelus as commonly printed has to be recited, but those who do not know the prayers by heart or who are unable to read them, may say five Hail Marys in their place. During paschal time the antiphon of Our Lady, "Regina cæli lætare," with versicle and prayer, is to be substituted for the Angelus. The Angelus indulgence is one of those, which are not suspended during the year of Jubilee.

History

The history of the Angelus is by no means easy to trace with confidence, and it is well to distinguish in this matter between what is certain and what is in some measure conjectural. In the first place it is certain that the Angelus at midday and in the morning were of later introduction than the evening Angelus. Secondly it is certain that the midday Angelus, which is the most recent of the three, was not a mere development or imitation of the morning and evening devotion. Thirdly, there can be no doubt that the practice of saying three Hail Mary's in the evening somewhere about sunset had become general throughout Europe in the first half of the fourteenth century and that it was recommended and indulged by Pope John XXII in 1318 and 1327. These facts are admitted by all writers on the subject, but when we try to push our investigations further we are confronted with certain difficulties. It seems needless to discuss all the problems involved. We may be content to state simply the nearly identical conclusions at which T. Esser, O.P., and the present writer have arrived, in two series of articles published about the same time quite independently of each other.

The Morning Angelus

This last suggestion about the *tres orationes* also offers some explanation of the fact that shortly after the recital of the three Hail Marys at evening had become familiar, a custom established itself of ringing a bell in the morning and of saying the Ave thrice. The earliest mention seems to be in the chronicle of the city of Parma, 1318, though it was the town-bell, which was rung in this case. Still the bishop exhorted all who heard it to say three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys for the preservation of peace, whence it was called "the peace bell". The same designation was also applied elsewhere to the evening bell. In spite of some difficulties it seems probable enough that this morning bell was also an imitation of the monastic triple peal for the *tres orationes* or morning prayers; for this, as

noted above, was rung at the morning office of Prime as well as at Complin. The morning Ave Maria soon became a familiar custom in all the countries of Europe, not excepting England, and was almost as generally observed as that of the evening. But while in England the evening Ave Maria is enjoined by Bishop John Stratford of Winchester as early as 1324. No formal direction as to the morning ringing is found before the instruction of Archbishop Arundel in 1399.

The Midday Angelus

This suggests a much more complicated problem which cannot be adequately discussed here. The one clear fact which seems to result alike from the statutes of several German Synods in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as also from books of devotion of a somewhat later date, is that the midday ringing, while often spoken of as a peace bell and formally commended by Louis XI of France in 1475 for that special object, was closely associated with the veneration of the Passion of Christ. At first it appears that this midday bell, e.g. at Prague in 1386, and at Mainz in 1423, was only rung on Fridays, but the custom by degrees extended to the other days of the week. In the English *Horæ* and the German *Hortulus Animæ* of the beginning of the sixteenth century rather lengthy prayers commemorating the Passion are provided to be said at the midday tolling of the bell in addition to the ordinary three Aves. Later on (c. 1575), in sundry books of devotion (e.g. Coster's Thesaurus), while our modern Angelus versicles are printed, much as we say them now, though minus the final prayer, an alternative form commemorating our Lord's death upon the cross is suggested for the noontide ringing. These instructions, which may already be found translated in an English manuscript written in 1576 (MSS. Hurlélan 2327), suggest that the Resurrection should be honored in the morning, the Passion at noon, and the Incarnation in the evening, since the times correspond to the hours at

which these great Mysteries actually occurred. In some prayer books of this epoch different devotions are suggested for each of the three ringings, e.g. the Regina Cœli for the morning (see Esser, 784), Passion prayers for noon and our present versicles for sundown. To some such practice we no doubt owe the substitution of Regina Cœli for the Angelus during paschal time. This substitution was recommended by Angelo Rocca and Quarti at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Our present three versicles seem first to have made their appearance in an Italian catechism printed at Venice in 1560 (Esser, 789); but the fuller form now universally adopted cannot be traced back earlier than 1612. Be it noted that somewhat earlier than this a practice grew up in Italy of saying a "De profundis" for the holy souls immediately after the evening Angelus. Another custom, also of Italian origin, is that of adding three Glorias to the Angelus in thanksgiving to the Blessed Trinity for the privileges bestowed upon our Lady.

The Evening Angelus

Although according to Father Esser's view we have no certain example of three Hail Marys being recited at the sound of the bell in the evening earlier than a decree of the Provincial Synod of Gran in the year 1307, still there are a good many facts which suggest that some such practice was current in the thirteenth century. Thus there is a vague and not very well confirmed tradition which ascribes to Pope Gregory IX, in 1239, an ordinance enjoining that a bell should be rung for the salutation and praises of Our Lady. Again, there is a grant of Bishop Henry of Brixen to the church of Freins in the Tyrol, also of 1239, which concedes an indulgence for saying three Hail Marys "at the evening tolling". This, indeed, has been suspected of interpolation, but the same objection cannot apply to a decree of Franciscan General Chapter in the time of St Bonaventure (1263 or 1269),