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# Jerome and Damasus

## Introduction

Jerome of Stridon (c. 342–420), famous for having produced the leading Latin text of the Bible (the Vulgate) as well as a wealth of commentaries, was one of the highest theological authorities in late antique Europe during the early Middle Ages. His translation project had begun in 382 when Pope Damasus I (c. 305–384), having recently retained Jerome as a secretary and counsellor during a visit of the latter to Rome, commissioned him to revise the then-current text of the gospels, in the Vetus Latina family of Bible redactions. Six letters between the two survive, all dating to the years 383–384 (see Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome*). These discuss matters of Scripture, not liturgy; the text below instead translates a Latin exchange falsely attributed to Jerome and Damasus, presumably to imbue its conclusion with authority (see Patrizia Lendinara’s contribution in *Fact and Fiction*, eds. Bauer and Krische, pp. 47–66).

Before reading this text, you may want to review your textbook’s section on numerals.

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## Manuscript

London, British Library MS Caligula A. xv, fol 140v (s. xi<sup>2</sup>)

## Text

(1) Her onginð Damasus papan smeagung wið Hieronime þone bokere hwilcan timan on sunnandagan oþþe on oðran dagan man mæssian mote: (2) “Leof broðer and ure efensacerd, (3) hwæt þincð þe be sunnandæge oþþe be oðran dagan on hwylcan timan hit alyfed si þæt man mæssian mote?”

(4) Hieronimus him þa þus andswarode, (5) “Uran þam eadigan and þam halgostan papan Damase ic Hieronimus hælu gewilnige. (6) Leof, nis þe na Godes riht forholen, (7) ac se bisceopsinoð þæs niceniscan geþeahtes þe full cuð is, (8) hu hit amang þreo hund and eahtatyne bisceopes geræd wæs (9) þæt nan sacerd ofer sunnandæges undern ne gedyrstlæce mæssan singan; (10) and gif hit þonne hwa do, (11) þæt he si amansumod fram Gode and mannum. (12) And on oþran dagan on þære fiftan tide and sixtan and seofþan nis na mæsseþenung alyfed, (13) ac man mot swiðe wel mæssan singan on ærnemorgen, (14) and on þære forman tide, (15) and on oðre and þriddan and feorþan, (16) and æfter middæge on þære eahteoðan tide, (17) and nigoðan and teoðan and ændlyftan and twelftan.”

(18) And se eadiga papa Damasus andswarode and cwæð, (19) “Riht is þæt þu sægst, and hit us eallum wel licað.”

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## Notes

1 **Damasus**: Latin names were declined sometimes in OE (as in “Hieronime” a few words down, and “Damase” at [5]), sometimes in Latin, sometimes not at all; Hebrew names were generally treated as indeclinable. Syntax makes clear that the name is here in the genitive.

7 **se bisceopsinoð þæs niceniscan geþeahtes**: The First Council of Nicaea (325) was the most famous of synods, which, among other things, had settled the nature of the Trinity, rejecting the Arian position that the Son, being born to the Father, must be lesser in power. The time of Mass was not discussed at Nicaea, but the list of matters settled on this occasion gained spurious items in the course of the Middle Ages.

12 **fifan tide and sixtan and sefoþan**: The twelve hours of the day were evenly divided between sunrise and sunset. Their objective time and duration thus varied through the year, but the general rule of thumb is that the third hour was 9am, the sixth noon, and the ninth 3pm.

## Lessons Learned

- Foreign names may follow various inflectional patterns, or none; syntactical context is a useful guide to their function in the clause.