Office of Readings

Thursday, December 25, 2003

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

OPENING

O God, come to my assistance.

Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

INVITATORY

Ant. Come, let us adore the Lord on this great solemnity.

Come, let us exult in the Lord; let us shout with joy to God our salvation.

Let us come before his face with praise and exult in him with psalms.

For the Lord is a great God and a great king above all gods.

For the Lord does not cast off his people; for in his hand are all the ends of the earth.

And the heights of the mountains belong to him.

For the sea is his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry land.

Come, let us adore and fall down before God; let us weep before the Lord who made us.

For he is the Lord our God; and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

As in the provocation, according to the day of temptation in the wilderness,

where your fathers tempted me; they tried me and saw my works.

For forty years I was close to this generation, and I said: "They always err in heart."

And these people have not known my ways, so I swore in my wrath that they will not enter into my rest.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Ant. Come, let us adore the Lord on this great solemnity.

HYMN

What Child Is This

> What child is this, who, laid to rest,
> on Mary's lap is sleeping?
> Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
> while shepherds watch are keeping?

PSALMODY

Psalm 75 *God of Victory*

> *Ant. Today Christ is born for us; glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.*

God is known in Judah; his name is great in Israel.

And his place is made in peace, and his dwelling in Zion.

There he broke the strength of bows, the shield, the sword, and the battle.

You enlighten wonderfully from the everlasting mountains.

All the foolish of heart were troubled; they have slept their sleep, and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands.

At your rebuke, O God of Jacob, those who mounted horses have slumbered.

You are terrible, and who will resist you? From then on, your wrath.

From the heavens you made judgment heard; the earth trembled and was still,

when God arose in judgment, so as to save all the meek of the earth.

For the thought of man will confess to you, and the remainder of thought will keep a feast to you.

Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them, all you who are around him, bringing gifts.

To him who is terrible, even to him who takes away the spirit of leaders, to the terrible before the kings of the earth.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

> *Ant. Today Christ is born for us; glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.*

Psalm 76 *Remembering God in Distress*

> *Ant. Today Christ is born for us; glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.*

I cried out to God with my voice, to God with my voice, and he gave heed to me.

In the day of my tribulation I sought God, with my hands raised at night before him, and I was not deceived.

My soul refused to be consoled; I remembered God and was delighted, and I was exercised, and my spirit swooned away.

My eyes anticipated the watches; I was troubled and did not speak.

I thought upon the days of old, and I had in mind the eternal years.

And I meditated in the night with my own heart, and I was exercised, and I swept my spirit.

"Will God cast off forever, and will he no more be favorable again?"

"Or will he cut off his mercy forever, from generation to generation?"

"Or will God forget to be merciful? Or will he in his anger shut up his mercies?"

And I said: "Now I have begun. This change is by the right hand of the Most High."

I remembered the works of the Lord, for I will remember your wonders from the beginning.

And I will meditate on all your works, and I will be exercised by your devices.

Your way, O God, is in the holy place; what God is as great as our God?

You are the God who does wonders; you have made your power known among the peoples.

With your arm you have redeemed your people, the sons of Jacob and of Joseph.

The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and were afraid; and the depths were troubled.

Great was the noise of the waters; the clouds sent out a voice; for your arrows passed away.

The voice of your thunder in a wheel; your lightnings have illuminated the world; the earth shook and trembled.

Your way is in the sea, and your paths in many waters, and your footsteps will not be known.

You have led your people like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

> *Ant. Today Christ is born for us; glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.*

Psalm 77 *God's Wonderful Works in History*

> *Ant. Today Christ is born for us; glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.*

Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth in parables; I will speak of things hidden from the beginning.

How many things have we heard and known, and our fathers have told us!

They were not hidden from their sons, in another generation.

Declaring the praises of the Lord and his powers and his wonders, which he has done.

And he established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel.

How many things he commanded our fathers, that they should make these known to their sons,

so that another generation might know them, the sons who will be born and who will rise up and declare them to their sons.

So that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, and seek his commandments.

That they may not become like their fathers, a perverse and exasperating generation,

a generation that does not set its heart aright and whose spirit is not faithful to God.

The sons of Ephraim, who bend and shoot the bow, were turned back in the day of battle.

They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law.

And they forgot his benefits and his wonders, which he showed them.

He did wonders before their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Tanis.

He divided the sea and led them through, and he made the waters stand up as if in a vessel.

And he led them with a cloud by day, and all the night with a light of fire.

He broke the rock in the desert, and gave them to drink, as if from the great deep.

He brought forth water from the rock, and he led forth waters as if rivers.

And they continued to sin against him; in the desert they provoked the Most High to wrath.

And they tempted God in their hearts, by asking for food according to their desires.

And they spoke ill of God; they said: "Can God provide a table in the wilderness?"

For he struck the rock and waters flowed and the streams overflowed.

"Can he also give bread, or provide a table for his people?"

Therefore, the Lord heard and was angered; and fire was kindled against Jacob, and wrath came up against Israel.

For they did not believe in God and did not trust in his salvation.

And he commanded the clouds from above and opened the gates of heaven.

And he rained down manna upon them to eat, and he gave them the bread of heaven.

Man ate the bread of angels; he sent them provisions in abundance.

He made the south wind to pass from heaven, and in his power he brought in the southwest wind.

And he rained flesh upon them like dust, and feathered fowl like the sand of the sea.
And they fell in the midst of their camp, all around their tabernacles.
So they ate and were greatly filled, and he gave them their desire.
They were not defrauded of that which they had desired. While their food was still in their mouth,
the wrath of God came upon them. And he killed the fat ones among them, and he brought down the elect of Israel.
In all of these things they still sinned; and they did not believe in his wonders.
And their days were spent in vanity, and their years in haste.
When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and came to him early in the morning.
And they remembered that God was their helper and the Most High God their redeemer.
And they loved him with their mouth and with their tongue they lied to him.
But their heart was not right with him; nor were they faithful in his covenant.
But he is merciful and will forgive their sins and will not destroy them.
And many times he turned away his anger; and he did not kindle all his wrath.
And he remembered that they are flesh: a passing wind that does not return.
How often did they provoke him in the desert and move him to wrath in the place without water?
And they turned back and tempted God, and they provoked the Holy One of Israel.
They remembered not his hand in the day that he redeemed them from the hand of the one who afflicted them.
How he placed his signs in Egypt and his wonders in the field of Tanis.
And he turned their rivers into blood, and their showers, so that they could not drink.
He sent among them the dog-fly, and it devoured them; and the frog, and it destroyed them.
And he gave their fruits to the mildew, and their labors to the locust.
And he killed their vines with hail and their sycamores with severe frost.
And he delivered their cattle to the hail, and their livestock to fire.
He sent upon them the wrath of his indignation, indignation and wrath and tribulation, sent by evil angels.
He cleared a path for his wrath; he did not spare their souls from death, and he enclosed their cattle in death.
And he struck every firstborn in the land of Egypt, the first fruits of all their labor in the tabernacles of Ham.
And he removed his people like sheep, and led them like a flock in the desert.
And he led them out in hope, and they did not fear; and the sea covered their enemies.
And he brought them into the mountain of his sanctification, the mountain which his right hand had acquired.
And he expelled the Gentiles before them, and divided their land to them by line.
And he settled the tribes of Israel in their tabernacles.
But they tempted and provoked the Most High God, and they did not keep his testimonies.
And they turned away and did not keep the covenant, just like their fathers; they were turned like a crooked bow.

They provoked him to anger on their hills, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.

God heard and despised them, and he reduced Israel greatly to nothing.

And he rejected the tabernacle in Shiloh, his tabernacle where he had dwelt among men.

And he delivered their strength into captivity and their beauty into the hands of the enemy.

And he enclosed his people in the sword, and he despised his inheritance.

Fire consumed their young men, and their virgins were not mourned.

Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows did not mourn.

And the Lord awoke as if out of sleep, and like a powerful man flushed with wine.

And he struck his enemies from behind; he put them to everlasting shame.

And he rejected the tabernacle of Joseph, and he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim.

But he chose the tribe of Judah, mount Zion which he loved.

And he built his sanctuary like a single-horned beast, like the earth which he founded forever.

And he chose his servant David and took him from the flocks of sheep; he brought him from following the ewes great with young.

To feed Jacob his servant and Israel his inheritance.

And he fed them in the innocence of his heart, and in the understanding of his hands he led them.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

> *Ant. Today Christ is born for us; glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.*

FIRST READING: SCRIPTURE

LUKE 2:10-12

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

RESPONSORY

V. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
R. and we have seen his glory.
V. Full of grace and truth,
R. we have seen his glory.

SECOND READING: PATRISTIC OR HAGIOGRAPHIC

Saint Maximus of Turin

Sermon 61 on the Nativity

The Sun of Justice

> A holy day dawns for us on which our Lord is born. It is called in holy scripture the day of the Lord because God, the creator of all days, has made it his own day in a special way. On this day Christ is born and holy church exults because the Sun of Justice has arisen. There is good reason to call Christ the Sun. The visible sun illumines the world; this Sun illumines the heart. The one maintains the order of the seasons; this one gives order to the life of the soul. The one appears and then sets; this one, once he has risen in the faithful heart, never sets. So it is that this Sun, in rising, filled the whole world with his light. Before his coming, everything was covered with the shadows of the old sin and all lay under the darkness of error. But now that the Light of the world has been born, we who were darkness have become light in the Lord, and we who were blind have received sight by our faith in him.

TE DEUM

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CONCLUDING PRAYER

O God, let the proclamation of the early church ring in our hearts: the Word became flesh and we have seen his glory. Grant us a share in that vision; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Let us praise the Lord.
And give him thanks.