Office of Readings

Friday, December 26, 2003

Saint Stephen, the First Martyr

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. Christ the Savior is born. Come, let us adore him.

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. Christ the Savior is born. Come, let us adore him.

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 78 *Lament Over the Destruction of Jerusalem (Part I)*

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

O God, the Gentiles have entered into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have placed Jerusalem in the place of fruit trees.

They have placed the dead bodies of your servants as food for the birds of the heavens, the flesh of your holy ones for the beasts of the earth.

They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem; and there was no one to bury them.

We have been made a reproach to our neighbors; a mockery and a derision to those who are around us.

How long, O Lord, will you be angry? Forever? Will your jealousy burn like fire?

Pour out your wrath upon the nations that have not known you, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon your name.

For they have devoured Jacob, and have made his place desolate.

Do not remember our former iniquities; let your mercies prevent us quickly, for we have been greatly impoverished.

Help us, O God our Savior, and for the honor of your name, O Lord, deliver us; and forgive us our sins for the sake of your name.

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 78 *Lament Over the Destruction of Jerusalem (Part II)*

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

Lest they should say among the Gentiles: "Where is their God?" And let there be made known among the nations, before our eyes, the avenging of the blood of your servants which has been poured out.

Let the groaning of the prisoners come in before you.

According to the greatness of your arm, take possession of the sons of those who have been put to death.

And repay to our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom; their reproach with which they have reproached you, O Lord.

But we, your people and the sheep of your pasture, will confess to you forever.

From generation to generation we will declare your praise.

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 79 *A Prayer for Restoration*

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

You who lead Joseph like a sheep, give ear; you who sit upon the cherubim, shine forth.

Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up your power and come to save us.

Convert us, O God; and show us your face, and we will be saved.

O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry against the prayer of your servants?

How long will you feed us with the bread of tears, and give us tears to drink in abundance?

You have set us in contradiction for our neighbors, and our enemies have mocked us.

O God of hosts, convert us; and show us your face, and we will be saved.

You have brought a vine from Egypt; you have expelled the Gentiles and planted it.

You have led its journey in its sight; and you planted its roots and it filled the earth.

Its shadow covered the mountains, and its branches the cedars of God.

It extended its branches even to the sea, and its shoots even to the river.

Why then have you broken down its hedge, so that all who pass along the way may pluck its grapes?

The boar from the forest has laid it waste, and a solitary wild beast has devoured it.

O God of hosts, turn toward us; look down from heaven and see, and visit this vineyard.

And restore it, which your right hand has planted, and upon the son of man whom you have confirmed for yourself.

Things set on fire and dug up will perish at the rebuke of your countenance.

Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand and upon the son of man whom you have confirmed for yourself.

And we have departed from you; you will enliven us and call upon your name.

O Lord God of hosts, convert us; and show us your face, and we will be saved.

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

GALATIANS 4:4-5

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

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 Peter Chrysologus

Sermon 160

The Word Made Flesh

> The mystery of the Incarnation is holy and sacred, holy and divine. It is holy because it was conceived by the Holy Spirit; divine because God himself took the initiative. And consider the marvel of it. A virgin conceives, yet remains a virgin; she gives birth, yet her integrity is untouched; a human being is born, yet God is not diminished. The Word becomes flesh, yet the Word does not cease to be. Earth acquires a heavenly citizen, yet heaven does not lose one. Power is clothed in weakness, yet the omnipotent is not diminished. The Eternal enters time, yet eternity remains unbroken. The Immense enters what is small, yet what is small does not contain the Immense. All this is a mystery. What is impossible by nature is possible for God. Believe what you cannot understand; worship what you cannot comprehend. Approach with wonder. The one born today is the one who made all things; the one who cried in the manger is the one who spoke the universe into being.

TE DEUM

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CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord, as we pray the Office of Readings during this holy season, draw us deeper into the mystery of your love made visible in Jesus Christ; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Let us praise the Lord.
And give him thanks.