Office of Readings

Friday, March 19, 2004

Saint Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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

Again We Keep This Solemn Fast

> Again we keep this solemn fast,
> a gift of faith from ages past,
> this Lent which binds us lovingly
> to faith and hope and charity.

PSALMODY

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

> *Ant. My sacrifice is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you will not despise.*

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. My sacrifice is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you will not despise.*

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

> *Ant. My sacrifice is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you will not despise.*

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. My sacrifice is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you will not despise.*

Psalm 79 *A Prayer for Restoration*

> *Ant. My sacrifice is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you will not despise.*

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. My sacrifice is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you will not despise.*

FIRST READING: SCRIPTURE

ISAIAH 44:22

I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you.

RESPONSORY

V. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love.

R. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love.

V. According to the multitude of your tender mercies,

R. blot out my transgressions.

SECOND READING: PATRISTIC OR HAGIOGRAPHIC

Tertullian

On Prayer, Chapter 28

Prayer Joined with Fasting

> With prayer, fasting is joined. Fasting is the soul of prayer; mercy is the life of fasting. So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others. If you do not close your ear to others, God will not close his ear to you. Thus the holy writings teach us: fasting has value when joined to prayer; prayer has power when it rises from a fasting and merciful heart. This is the fast that God chooses, says Isaiah: loose the bonds of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, break every yoke, share your bread with the hungry, bring the poor who are cast out to your house, cover the naked. This fast is not merely going without food; it is a turning of the whole life toward God and toward the neighbor. The exterior act of fasting is only the outward sign of an interior conversion of heart.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

God of mercy, may the words of scripture and the wisdom of the fathers strengthen our Lenten journey and lead us toward a holy Easter; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Let us praise the Lord.
And give him thanks.