Office of Readings

Wednesday, February 23, 2005

Saint Polycarp, Bishop and 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. Come, let us adore Christ, who for our sake bore the cross and conquered death.

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 Christ, who for our sake bore the cross and conquered death.

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 52 *The Folly of Wickedness*

> *Ant. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.*

The fool has said in his heart: "There is no God." They are corrupt and have become abominable in their iniquities; there is no one who does good.

God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there is anyone who understands or seeks God.

They have all turned aside; they have all become useless together; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Will all those who work iniquity not come to know it? They consume my people like food.

They have not called upon God; they trembled there with fear, where there was no fear.

For God has scattered the bones of those who are pleasing to men; they have been confounded, because God has despised them.

Who will give from Zion the salvation of Israel? When God will have turned back the captivity of his people, Jacob will rejoice, and Israel will be glad.

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. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.*

Psalm 53 *Prayer for Help*

> *Ant. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.*

Save me, O God, by your name, and judge me by your strength.

O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth.

For strangers have risen up against me, and the strong have sought my soul, and they have not set God before their eyes.

For behold, God is my helper, and the Lord is the upholder of my soul.

Turn back the evils upon my enemies and scatter them in your truth.

I will freely sacrifice to you, and I will confess to your name, O Lord, because it is good.

For you have rescued me from all tribulation, and my eye has looked down upon my enemies.

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. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.*

Psalm 54 *Betrayal by a Friend*

> *Ant. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.*

Give ear, O God, to my prayer, and do not despise my supplication.

Be attentive to me and hear me. I was troubled in my exercise, and I was disturbed

at the voice of the enemy and the tribulation of the sinner.

For they have turned iniquities upon me, and in anger they were troublesome to me.

My heart was troubled within me, and the fear of death fell upon me.

Fear and trembling came upon me, and darkness covered me.

And I said: "Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?"

"Behold, I have gone far away, fleeing, and I remained in the wilderness."

"I waited for him who saves me from pusillanimity of spirit and from a storm."

Cast down, O Lord, and divide their tongues; for I have seen iniquity and contradiction in the city.

Day and night, iniquity will surround it on its walls; and in its midst are labor and injustice.

And usury and deceit have not departed from its streets.

For if my enemy had reproached me, I would certainly have endured it.

And if he who hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hidden myself from him.

But you, a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar,

who together with me took sweet foods; in the house of God we walked with consent.

Let death come upon them, and let them descend alive into hell.

For there are evils in their dwellings, in their midst.

But I have cried out to God, and the Lord will save me.

Evening and morning and at midday I will speak and declare, and he will hear my voice.

He will redeem my soul in peace from those who draw near to me, for among many they were with me.

God will hear and humble them, who is before the ages. For there is no change in them and they have not feared God.

He has extended his hand in retribution. They have defiled his covenant; they were divided by the wrath of his face, and his heart drew near.

His words are smoother than oil, and they are darts.

Cast your care upon the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will not allow the just to waver forever.

But you, O God, will bring them down into the pit of destruction. Men of blood and deceit will not halve their days; but I will trust in you, O Lord.

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. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.*

FIRST READING: SCRIPTURE

HOSEA 6:6

> For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

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

Origen of Alexandria

Homilies on Leviticus 10

The Interior Sacrifice

> You have heard that God loves a cheerful giver. A cheerful giver is not one compelled by necessity but one who offers of his own free will. So in prayer, when you pray willingly, you are cheerful. But if you come to prayer burdened, reluctant, and sluggish, you are not a cheerful giver of prayer. God, therefore, receives the prayer of one who prays willingly. Do not let prayer be a labor for you; let it be a joy. The same holds for fasting. If your fast is a genuine offering, offered willingly from the heart, with love and with the hope of growth in holiness, then God accepts it as a sweet fragrance. But if you fast while harboring bitterness toward your neighbor, or performing the fast for the admiration of others, then the fast is not acceptable. What God seeks is the interior sacrifice: a broken and contrite heart, a will offered to him in love, a life lived in imitation of his Son.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Father, the church's saints and fathers wrote with deep understanding of the human struggle with sin and the divine remedy of grace. May their wisdom guide us through this Lenten season; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Let us praise the Lord.
And give him thanks.