Office of Readings

Monday, December 25, 2006

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?

Psalm 67 *The Lord's Triumphal March*

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

Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered, and let those who hate him flee from before his face.

As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish away; as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish before the face of God.

And let the just feast and rejoice in the sight of God, and be pleased with gladness.

Sing to God, sing a psalm to his name; make a road for him who ascends over the west.

Lord is his name; rejoice in his sight; they will be troubled before his face,

the father of orphans and the judge of widows.

God is in his holy place; God who makes the solitary to dwell in a house,

who leads forth the prisoners to strength; likewise those who provoke, who dwell in sepulchres.

O God, when you went forth in the sight of your people, when you crossed through the desert,

the earth was moved, and the heavens dropped dew before the face of the God of Sinai, before the face of the God of Israel.

You will set apart a voluntary rain, O God, for your inheritance; and it has been weakened, but you have restored it.

Your animals will dwell in it; in your sweetness, O God, you have provided for the poor.

The Lord will give a word to those who proclaim the Gospel with great power.

The King of Hosts is the beloved one, and the beauty of the house will divide the spoils.

If you sleep among the midst of lots, you will be like the wings of a dove covered with silver and the feathers of her back with a pale gold.

When the Heavenly One discerns kings upon it, they will be made white as snow in Zalmon.

The mountain of God is a fat mountain; a curdled mountain, a fat mountain.

Why do you suspect, you curdled mountains, that God has chosen to dwell on this mountain?

For the Lord will dwell even to the end; the chariot of God is accompanied by ten thousands; thousands of those who rejoice.

The Lord is among them in Sinai, in the holy place.

You have ascended on high; you have taken captivity captive; you have received gifts among men.

Yes, for those who do not believe, the Lord God will dwell there.

Blessed is the Lord day by day; the God of our salvation will prosper our way.

Our God is the God of salvation, and the ways of death belong to the Lord God.

Yet God will crush the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of those who walk on in their offenses.

The Lord said: "I will convert from Bashan; I will convert into the depth of the sea."

"So that your foot may be dipped in blood: the tongue of your dogs with enemies from yourself."

They have seen your proceedings, O God, the proceedings of my God, my king, who is in the holy place.

The leaders joined in song with the singers, in the midst of the young women playing timbrels.

In the churches, bless God the Lord from the fountains of Israel.

There is Benjamin, a youth, in ecstasy of mind; the leaders of Judah, their commanders; the leaders of Zabulon, the leaders of Naphtali.

Command your strength, O God; confirm this, O God, what you have worked in us.

From your temple in Jerusalem, kings will offer gifts to you.

Rebuke the wild beasts of the reeds, the congregation of bulls with the cows of the peoples, so that they may not exclude those who have been proven like silver.

Scatter the nations that desire wars.

Ambassadors will arrive out of Egypt; Ethiopia will hasten her hands to God.

Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth; sing psalms to the Lord.

Sing to God, who ascends above the heaven of heavens, to the east.

Behold, he will give his voice a voice of power.

Give glory to God above Israel; his magnificence and his power in the clouds.

God is wonderful in his holy ones; the God of Israel himself will give power and strength to his people. Blessed be God.

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 68 *Zeal for Your House Consumes Me (Part I)*

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

Save me, O God, for the waters have entered even to my soul.

I am stuck in the mud of the deep, and there is no firm place.

I have arrived in the depth of the sea, and a storm has overwhelmed me.

I have labored in crying out; my jaws have become hoarse; my eyes have failed, while I hope in my God.

Those who hate me without cause have been multiplied above the hairs of my head.

My enemies have been strengthened, who persecute me wrongly; then I repaid what I had not taken away.

O God, you know my foolishness, and my offenses have not been hidden from you.

Let not those who wait for you be confounded because of me, O Lord, the Lord of hosts.

Let not those who seek you be confounded because of me, O God of Israel.

For it is for your sake that I have endured reproach; confusion has covered my face.

I have become a stranger to my brothers and a foreigner to the sons of my mother.

For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen upon me.

And I covered my soul with fasting, and it became a reproach to me.

And I set sackcloth as my garment, and I became a byword to them.

Those who sit in the gate were talking against me, and those who drink wine were singing about me.

But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord, in the time of good pleasure.

In the multitude of your mercy, hear me in the truth of your salvation.

Draw me away from the mire, so that I may not be stuck fast; rescue me from those who hate me and from the deep waters.

Let not the storm of water drown me, nor the deep swallow me up, nor the pit close its mouth over me.

Hear me, O Lord, for your mercy is kind; according to the multitude of your compassions, look upon 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.

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

Psalm 68 *Zeal for Your House Consumes Me (Part II)*

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

And do not turn away your face from your servant; because I am in tribulation, hear me quickly.

Attend to my soul and free it; rescue me because of my enemies.

You know my reproach, and my confusion, and my shame.

In your sight are all those who trouble me; my heart has expected reproach and misery.

And I waited for someone who would grieve together, and there was none; and for one who would console, and I found none.

And they gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Let their table before them become a snare, and a retribution, and a scandal.

Let their eyes be darkened, so that they may not see; and bow down their back always.

Pour out your indignation upon them, and let the furor of your anger take hold of them.

Let their dwelling place be desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in their tabernacles.

For they have persecuted him whom you have struck, and over the grief of my wounds they have added more.

Add iniquity to their iniquity, and let them not enter into your justice.

Let them be wiped out from the book of the living, and let them not be written in with the just.

I am poor and sorrowful; your salvation, O God, has lifted me up.

I will praise the name of God with a canticle, and I will magnify him with praise.

And it will please God more than a new calf, with horns producing and hoofs.

Let the poor see and rejoice; seek God, and your soul will live.

For God has heard the poor, and has not despised his captives.

Let the heavens and earth praise him, the sea and everything that crawls in them.

For God will save Zion, and the cities of Judah will be built up, and they will dwell there and obtain it by inheritance.

And the seed of his servants will possess it, and those who love his name will dwell in it.

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

JOHN 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

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 Athanasius

On the Incarnation, Chapter 1

Why the Word Became Flesh

> You must understand why it is that the Word of the Father, so great and so high, has been made manifest in bodily form. He has not assumed a body as proper to his own nature, far from it, for as the Word he is without body. But while remaining what he was and is, he received a servant's form to express it in bodily terms. This he did, and we may wonder at it, out of his great love for mankind, so that in him we might have means of knowing the invisible Father. For how were we to know him? How could the mind of man get beyond the visible world? The Word, the Master, took a servant's form. For since human minds had fallen quite away from the mental contemplation of God, and, by reason of the similarity of their nature with the body, were regarding only the things of the sense, the Savior of us all, the Word of God, in his great love took to himself a body and moved as Man among men, meeting their senses, so to speak, halfway. He wanted to teach them, through his works in the body, to know him as the Father's Word, and through him to know the Father.

TE DEUM

1

CONCLUDING PRAYER

God of glory, your word became flesh. May this reading of the church's prayer deepen our wonder at the gift of the incarnation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Let us praise the Lord.

And give him thanks.