Office of Readings

Wednesday, December 26, 2001

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?

Psalm 72 *The Problem of the Wicked*

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

How good is God to Israel, to those who are upright in heart.

But as for me, my feet were almost moved; my steps had nearly slipped.

For I was envious of the wicked, seeing the peace of sinners.

For there is no consideration of their death, and there is no strength in their wounds.

They are not in the labor of men, and with men they will not be scourged.

Therefore pride holds them; they are covered with their injustice and their impiety.

Their iniquity has gone forth as if from fatness; they have crossed over into the affection of the heart.

They have thought and spoken wickedness; they have spoken iniquity on high.

They set their mouth against heaven, and their tongue passed through on the earth.

Therefore my people will be converted here and full days will be found in them.

And they said: "How does God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?"

Behold, these are sinners; and abounding in the world, they have obtained riches.

And I said: "Then without cause I have justified my heart and washed my hands among the innocent."

And I have been scourged all day long, and my punishment has been in the mornings.

If I said: "I will speak this way," behold, I would condemn the generation of your sons.

I considered this, so that I might understand; this labor is before me

until I go into the sanctuary of God and come to understand their end.

Yet truly, you have placed slippery things for them; you have cast them down, while they were raised up.

How have they been desolated in a moment? They have perished and have come to an end because of their iniquity.

As a dream of those who awake, O Lord, in your city you will reduce their image to nothing.

For my heart has been inflamed, and my reins have been changed.

And I have been reduced to nothing and I knew nothing; I have been like a beast before you.

And I have always been with you; you have held my right hand.

And in your will you have led me, and with glory you have received me.

For what do I have in heaven, and what have I desired upon the earth besides you?

My flesh and my heart have fainted away; O God of my heart, and God, my portion forever.

For behold those who set themselves apart from you will perish; you have destroyed all who fornicate away from you.

But it is good for me to adhere to God, to place my hope in the Lord God,

so that I may announce all your praises, in the gates of the daughter of Zion.

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 73 *A Lament Over the Destroyed Sanctuary*

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

Why, O God, have you rejected us to the end? Why has the wrath of your anger fumed against the sheep of your pasture?

Remember your congregation, which you possessed from the beginning.

You redeemed the scepter of your inheritance; mount Zion, in which you have dwelt.

Lift up your hands against their pride unto the end; see what evils the enemy has done in the sanctuary.

And those who hate you have gloried in the midst of your solemnity; they set up their signs for signs.

As if in a thicket of wood with axes, they have cut down at once the carved works of it.

With axe and pick-axe they have broken it down.

They have set your sanctuary on fire; they have defiled the dwelling place of your name on the earth.

They said in their heart, the whole kindred of them together: "Let us abolish all the festivals of God from the land."

Our signs we have not seen; there is now no prophet, and he will not know us anymore.

How long, O God, will the enemy reproach? Is the adversary to provoke your name to the end?

Why do you turn your hand away, and your right hand, from the midst of your bosom, to the end?

But God is our king before ages; he has worked salvation in the midst of the earth.

You strengthened the sea by your power; you crushed the heads of the dragons in the water.

You broke the heads of the dragon; you gave him as food for the people of the Ethiopians.

You broke apart the fountain and the torrent; you dried up the rivers of Ethan.

Yours is the day, and yours is the night; you fashioned the morning light and the sun.

You made all the limits of the earth; summer and spring you formed them.

Remember this: the enemy has reproached the Lord, and a foolish people has provoked your name.

Do not give up to wild beasts the souls of those who confess to you; and do not forget the souls of your poor in the end.

Look upon your covenant; for those who are humiliated have been filled with those who are dark of the earth.

Let not the humble be turned away in shame; the poor and needy will praise your name.

Arise, O God; judge your cause; remember your reproaches, those which the foolish man utters against you all day long.

Do not forget the voices of your enemies; the pride of those who hate you ascends continually.

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 74 *God, the Just Judge*

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

We will confess to you, O God; we will confess and call upon your name. We will declare your wondrous works.

"When I receive the time, I will judge justices."

"The earth was melted, and all who dwell in it; I have strengthened its pillars."

I said to the iniquitous: "Do not act iniquitously," and to the sinners: "Do not exalt the horn."

"Do not exalt your horn on high; do not speak iniquity against God."

For neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert hills:

for God is the judge; one he humbles and another he exalts.

For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup of wine full of mixture, and he has poured it from this to that.

Yet truly the dregs thereof are not emptied; all the sinners of the earth will drink from it.

But I will announce it forever; I will sing to the God of Jacob.

And I will break all the horns of sinners, and the horns of the just will be exalted.

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

MICAH 5:4-5

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

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 Leo the Great

Sermon 6 on the Nativity

Share in the Divine Nature

> Dearly beloved, today our Savior is born. Let us rejoice. Sadness should have no place on the birthday of life. The fear of death has been swallowed up; life brings us joy with the promise of eternity. No one is shut out from this joy; all share the same reason for rejoicing. Our Lord, victor over sin and death, finding no man free from sin, came to free us all. Let the saint rejoice as he sees the palm of victory at hand. Let the sinner be glad as he receives the offer of forgiveness. Let the gentile take courage as he is summoned to life. For the Son of God in the fullness of time has united himself to a human nature in order to reconcile it to its maker. You then, dearly beloved, should recognize your dignity. Since you have been made partakers of the divine nature, do not return by evil deeds to the former base condition. Bear in mind of what head and of what body you are a member. Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of the kingdom of God.

TE DEUM

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CONCLUDING PRAYER

Father, the saints and fathers of the church proclaimed the mystery of the incarnation with joy. May their words renew our joy in the Word made flesh; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Let us praise the Lord.
And give him thanks.