Office of Readings

Monday, December 31, 2001

Saint Sylvester I, Pope

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 4 *Evening Prayer of Trust*

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

When I called upon him, the God of my justice heard me; in tribulation you have enlarged me. Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.

O sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek out falsehood?

Know that the Lord has made his holy one wonderful; the Lord will hear me when I cry out to him.

Be angry, but do not sin; what you say in your hearts, regret it upon your beds.

Offer up a sacrifice of justice and trust in the Lord. Many say, "Who shows us good things?"

The light of your face, O Lord, has been impressed upon us; you have given joy to my heart.

By the fruit of their grain, their wine and oil, they are multiplied.

In peace, together in the selfsame, I will sleep and I will rest.

For you, O Lord, have singularly settled me in hope.

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 5 *A Morning Plea*

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

Give ear to my words, O Lord; understand my cry.

Attend to the voice of my prayer, O my King and my God.

For to you I will pray; O Lord, in the morning you will hear my voice.

In the morning I will stand before you, and I will see; because you are not a God who wills iniquity.

Neither will the malicious dwell near you, nor will the unjust persist before your eyes.

You hate all those who work iniquity; you will destroy all who speak falsehood.

The bloodthirsty and deceitful man the Lord will abominate.

But I, in the multitude of your mercy, will enter your house; I will worship toward your holy temple in your fear.

Lead me, O Lord, in your justice; because of my enemies, direct my way in your sight.

For there is no truth in their mouth; their heart is vain.

Their throat is an open sepulchre; they acted deceitfully with their tongues; judge them, O God.

Let them fall from their devices; according to the multitude of their wickednesses, cast them out, for they have provoked you, O Lord.

But let all who hope in you rejoice; they will exult forever, and you will dwell in them.

And all who love your name will glory in you, for you will bless the just.

O Lord, as with a shield of your good will, you have crowned us.

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 6 *Prayer in Distress*

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

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your indignation, nor chastise me in your wrath.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled.

And my soul is greatly troubled; but, O Lord, how long?

Return, O Lord, and rescue my soul; save me for the sake of your mercy.

For there is no one in death who is mindful of you, and who will confess you in the underworld?

I have labored in my groaning; every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears.

My eye is troubled by rage; I have grown old among all my enemies.

Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity, for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping.

The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord has received my prayer.

All my enemies will be put to shame and greatly troubled; they will be turned back and put to shame very suddenly.

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.

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.