Office of Readings

Wednesday, March 26, 2003

Lent, Week 3 — Wednesday

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.

Psalm 72 *The Problem of the Wicked*

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

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

Psalm 73 *A Lament Over the Destroyed Sanctuary*

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

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

Psalm 74 *God, the Just Judge*

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

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. 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.