Office of Readings

Wednesday, February 25, 2004

Ash 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 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

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 10 *Trust in the Lord*

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

In the Lord I have trusted; how do you say to my soul: "Flee to the mountain like a sparrow!"

For behold, sinners have bent their bow; they have prepared their arrows in the quiver, to shoot in the dark the upright of heart.

For they have destroyed the things that you have accomplished; but what has the just man done?

The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven.

His eyes look upon the poor; his eyelids examine the sons of men.

The Lord examines the just and the impious; but he who loves iniquity hates his own soul.

He will rain down snares upon sinners; fire and brimstone and the spirit of tempests will be the portion of their cup.

For the Lord is just and has loved justices; his face has seen uprightness.

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 11 *Prayer Against the Faithless*

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

Save me, O Lord, for the holy man has failed, for truths have decreased from among the sons of men.

They have spoken vain things, each one to his neighbor; deceitful lips are in their heart, and in their heart they have spoken evils.

May the Lord destroy all deceitful lips and the tongue that speaks proud things.

Those who say: "We will magnify our tongue; our lips are our own; who is our Lord?"

"Because of the misery of the needy and the groaning of the poor, I will now arise," says the Lord.

"I will place him in salvation; I will deal confidently with him."

The words of the Lord are pure words: silver tried by fire, purged from the earth, refined sevenfold.

You, O Lord, will keep us and preserve us from this generation forever.

The impious walk around; according to your greatness you have multiplied the sons of men.

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 12 *Trusting in God's Salvation*

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

How long, O Lord, will you forget me to the end? How long do you turn your face away from me?

How long will I take counsel in my soul, sorrow in my heart through the day?

How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Look upon me and hear me, O Lord my God.

Enlighten my eyes, lest I ever sleep in death, lest at any time my enemy say: "I have prevailed against him."

Those who trouble me will rejoice when I am moved; but I have trusted in your mercy.

My heart will rejoice in your salvation; I will sing to the Lord, who gives good things to me, and I will sing to the name of the Lord Most High.

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.