Office of Readings

Wednesday, March 31, 2004

Lent, Week 5 — 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.

PSALMODY

Psalm 31 *The Blessedness of Forgiveness*

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

Blessed are those whose iniquities have been forgiven and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord has not imputed sin, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Because I was silent, my bones grew old, while I was crying out all day long.

For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; I was turned in my misery while the thorn was being driven in.

I have acknowledged my sin to you and I have not concealed my injustice.

I said: "I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord," and you forgave the impiety of my sin.

For this, every holy one will pray to you in an acceptable time.

Yet truly in a flood of many waters, they will not approach him.

You are my refuge from tribulation which surrounds me; O my joy, rescue me from those who encircle me.

I will give you understanding and I will instruct you in this way in which you will proceed; I will fix my eyes upon you.

Do not become like the horse and the mule, who have no understanding.

With bit and bridle bind fast their jaws, those who do not draw near to you.

Many are the scourges of the sinner, but mercy will surround those who hope in the Lord.

Rejoice in the Lord and exult, you just, and glory, all you upright of heart.

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 32 *Praise to the Creator*

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

Rejoice in the Lord, O just ones; praise is proper to the upright.

Confess to the Lord with harp; sing to him with a psaltery of ten strings.

Sing to him a new song; play skillfully with jubilation.

For the word of the Lord is right, and all his works are in good faith.

He loves mercy and judgment; the earth is full of the mercy of the Lord.

The heavens were established by the word of the Lord, and all their power by the spirit of his mouth.

He gathers the waters of the sea together as if in a vessel; he places the depths in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the Lord, and let all the inhabitants of the world be moved before him.

For he spoke and it was done; he commanded and it was created.

The Lord scatters the counsel of the nations; but he rejects the intentions of peoples and repudiates the counsel of leaders.

But the counsel of the Lord remains forever; the thoughts of his heart endure from generation to generation.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his inheritance.

The Lord has looked down from heaven; he has seen all the sons of men.

From his prepared habitation, he has gazed upon all who dwell upon the earth.

He who fashioned their hearts individually, who understands all their works.

A king is not saved by a great army, and a giant will not be saved by his own great power.

A horse is a vain means of safety, and he will not be saved by the abundance of his strength.

Behold, the eyes of the Lord are upon those who fear him and upon those who hope in his mercy,

to rescue their souls from death and to nourish them in famine.

Our soul is patient with the Lord, for he is our helper and our protector.

For in him our heart will be joyful, and in his holy name we have trusted.

Let your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, just as we have hoped in you.

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 33 *Taste and See the Goodness of the Lord*

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

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise will always be in my mouth.

My soul will be praised in the Lord; let the meek hear and rejoice.

Magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.

I sought the Lord and he heard me, and he rescued me from all my troubles.

Approach him and be enlightened, and your faces will not be confounded.

This poor man cried out and the Lord heard him, and he saved him from all his troubles.

The Angel of the Lord will encompass those who fear him and will rescue them.

Taste and see that the Lord is sweet; blessed is the man who hopes in him.

Fear the Lord, all you his saints, for there is no indigence for those who fear him.

The rich have been in need and have been hungry, but those who seek the Lord will not be deprived of any good thing.

Come, sons, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

Who is the man who desires life? Who loves to see good days?

Restrain your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.

Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and his ears attend to their prayers.

But the countenance of the Lord is upon those who do evil, to destroy their remembrance from the earth.

The just cried out, and the Lord heard them and rescued them from all their tribulations.

The Lord is near to those who are troubled in heart, and he will save the humble of spirit.

Many are the afflictions of the just, and from all of them the Lord will rescue them.

The Lord keeps all their bones; not one of them will be broken.

The death of sinners is terrible, and those who hate the just will be guilty.

The Lord will redeem the souls of his servants, and none of those who hope in him will be guilty.

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.