Office of Readings

Friday, December 31, 2004

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 16 *A Prayer of Righteousness*

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

Hear, O Lord, my justice; attend to my supplication.

Give ear to my prayer, which proceeds not from deceitful lips.

Let my judgment come forth from your face; let your eyes see equities.

You have tested my heart and visited it in the night; you have tried me by fire, and iniquity has not been found in me.

My mouth has not spoken like the works of men; for the sake of the words of your lips, I have kept hard ways.

Direct my steps in your paths, so that my footsteps will not be moved.

I have cried out, for you heard me, O God; incline your ear to me and hear my words.

Make your mercies wonderful, you who save those who trust in you.

Keep me as the pupil of your eye; protect me under the shadow of your wings,

from the face of the wicked who have afflicted me.

My enemies have surrounded my soul; they have enclosed themselves in their own fat; their mouth has spoken with pride.

They cast me out and now surround me; their eyes they have fixed, bowing down to the earth.

They have seized me like a lion prepared for prey, and like a young lion dwelling in hidden places.

Arise, O Lord, go before him and overthrow him; rescue my soul from the wicked with your sword.

Divide them from your hand by the Lord, divide them from the earth in their life.

Their belly has been filled from your hidden things; they have been satisfied with pork and have left the remainder to their little ones.

But I will appear before your face in justice; I will be satisfied when your glory appears.

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 17 *Thanksgiving for Deliverance*

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

I will love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my foundation and my refuge and my deliverer.

My God is my helper, and I will hope in him; my defender and the horn of my salvation and my protector.

Praising, I will call upon the Lord, and I will be saved from my enemies.

The sorrows of death surrounded me, and the torrents of iniquity troubled me.

The sorrows of hell surrounded me; the snares of death anticipated me.

In my tribulation I called upon the Lord, and I cried out to my God.

And he heard my voice from his holy temple, and my cry in his sight entered into his ears.

The earth moved and trembled; the foundations of the mountains were troubled and were shaken, because he was angry with them.

Smoke ascended in his wrath, and a fire blazed from his face; coals were kindled from it.

And he inclined the heavens and descended, and darkness was under his feet.

And he ascended above the cherubim and flew; he flew on the wings of the winds.

And he placed darkness as his covering, his tent around him: dark waters in the clouds of the air.

From the brightness before him, clouds passed by: hail and coals of fire.

And the Lord thundered from heaven, and the Most High gave forth his voice: hail and coals of fire.

And he sent forth his arrows and he scattered them; he multiplied lightnings and he troubled them.

And the sources of waters appeared, and the foundations of the world were revealed at your rebuke, O Lord, at the blasting of the breath of your wrath.

He sent from the highest place and took me; and he received me out of many waters.

He will deliver me from my strong enemies and from those who hate me; for they were mightier than me.

They took me before in the day of my affliction, and the Lord became my protector.

And he brought me into a wide open space; he saved me, because he was pleased with me.

And the Lord will reward me according to my justice, and will repay me according to the cleanness of my hands.

For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and I have not acted impiously with my God.

For all his judgments are in my sight, and his justices I have not put away from me.

And I will be immaculate with him, and I will keep myself from my iniquity.

And the Lord will repay me according to my justice, and according to the cleanness of my hands before his eyes.

With the holy one, you will be holy, and with the innocent man, you will be innocent.

And with the chosen, you will be chosen, and with the perverse, you will be perverted.

For you will save the humble people, and you will humble the eyes of the proud.

For you will illuminate my lamp, O Lord; O my God, illuminate my darkness.

For in you I will be delivered from temptation, and through my God I will leap over a wall.

My God, his way is immaculate; the words of the Lord are tried by fire; he is the protector of all who trust in him.

For who is God, except the Lord? Or who is God, except our God?

God who has girded me with strength and made my way immaculate.

Who has made my feet like the feet of stags and who leads me upon high places.

Who trains my hands for battle, and you have made my arms like a brass bow.

And you have given me the protection of your salvation, and your right hand has held me up.

And your discipline has corrected me unto the end, and your discipline itself will teach me.

You have enlarged my steps under me, and my tracks have not been weakened.

I will pursue my enemies and overtake them, and I will not turn back until they fail.

I will crush them, and they will not be able to stand; they will fall under my feet.

And you have girded me with strength for battle, and you have thrown down under me those who rose up against me.

And you have given me the backs of my enemies, and you have destroyed those who hated me.

They cried out, but there was none to save them: to the Lord, but he did not hear them.

And I will crush them like dust before the face of the wind; I will wipe them out like the mud of the streets.

You will rescue me from the contradictions of the people; you will make me the head of the Gentiles.

A people whom I did not know will serve me; at the hearing of the ear they will obey me.

The foreign sons have lied to me, the foreign sons have aged, and they have limped away from their paths.

The Lord lives, and blessed is my God, and the God of my salvation will be exalted.

O God, who gives me vengeance and subdues the peoples under me, my deliverer from my wrathful enemies.

And you will exalt me from those who rise up against me; from the iniquitous man you will rescue me.

For this reason I will confess to you among the nations, O Lord, and I will sing to your name.

Giving great salvation to his king, and showing mercy to his Christ David and to his seed, even forever.

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 18 *The Heavens Proclaim God's Glory*

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

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands.

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

There are no speeches or words; their voices are not heard.

Their sound has gone forth throughout all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.

He has placed his tabernacle in the sun; and he, like a bridegroom going forth from his wedding chamber, has exulted like a giant to run the way.

His going forth is from the highest heaven, and his return is to its height; and nothing is hidden from his heat.

The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls; the testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones.

The justices of the Lord are upright, rejoicing hearts; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening eyes.

The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves.

They are to be desired above gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

For your servant keeps them; in keeping them there is a great reward.

Who understands sins? Cleanse me from my hidden ones.

And from the sins of others spare your servant; if they have no dominion over me, then I will be immaculate, and I will be cleansed from the greatest sin.

And the words of my mouth will be such that they are pleasing, and the meditation of my heart is always in your sight.

O Lord, my helper and my redeemer.

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

GALATIANS 4:4-5

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

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 Peter Chrysologus

Sermon 160

The Word Made Flesh

> The mystery of the Incarnation is holy and sacred, holy and divine. It is holy because it was conceived by the Holy Spirit; divine because God himself took the initiative. And consider the marvel of it. A virgin conceives, yet remains a virgin; she gives birth, yet her integrity is untouched; a human being is born, yet God is not diminished. The Word becomes flesh, yet the Word does not cease to be. Earth acquires a heavenly citizen, yet heaven does not lose one. Power is clothed in weakness, yet the omnipotent is not diminished. The Eternal enters time, yet eternity remains unbroken. The Immense enters what is small, yet what is small does not contain the Immense. All this is a mystery. What is impossible by nature is possible for God. Believe what you cannot understand; worship what you cannot comprehend. Approach with wonder. The one born today is the one who made all things; the one who cried in the manger is the one who spoke the universe into being.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord, as we pray the Office of Readings during this holy season, draw us deeper into the mystery of your love made visible in Jesus Christ; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Let us praise the Lord.
And give him thanks.