

Second Reading

F Rom a Ser-mon by Saint Le- o the Great, Pope.

Dear-ly be-lov-ed, to-day our Sav-ior is born let us re-joice.

Sad-ness should have no place on the birth-day of life. The fear of death has been swallowed up; life brings us joy with the promise of e-ter-nal hap-pi-ness. No one is shut out from this joy; all share the same rea-son for re-joic-ing. Our Lord, vic-tor o-ver sin and death, finding no man free from sin, came to free us all. Let the saint rejoice as he sees the palm of vic-to-ry at hand. Let the sin-ner be glad as he re-ceives

the of-fer of for-give-ness. Let the pa-gan take cour-age as he is summoned to life. In the fullness of time, chos-en in the un-fath-om-a-ble depths of God's wis-dom, the Son of God took for him-self our com-mon hu-man-i-ty in or-der to re-con-cile with its cre-a-tor. He came to o-verthrow the dev-il, the o-ri-gin of death, in that ver-y na-ture by which he had o-ver-thrown man-kind. And so at the birth of our Lord the an-gels sing in joy: *Glo-ry to God in the highest*, and they proclaim *peace to his people on earth* as they see the heav-en-ly Je-ru-sa-lem be-ing built from all the nations of the world. When

the an-gels on high are so ex-ult-ant at this mar-ve-lous work of
 God's goodness, what joy should it not bring to the low-ly hearts
 of men? Belov-ed, let us give thanks to God the Father, through
 his Son, in the Ho-ly Spir-it, because in his great love for us
 he took pit-y on us, and when we were dead in our sins he
 brought us to life with Christ, so that in him we might be a new
 cre-a-tion. Let us throw off our old na-ture and all its ways,
 and, as we have come to birth in Christ, let us renounce the works
 of the flesh. Christian, re-mem-ber your dig-ni-ty, and now that

you share in God's own na-ture, do not return by sin to your form-
 er base con-di-tion. Bear in mind who is your head and of whose
 bod-y you are a mem-ber. Do not for-get that you have been
 rescued from the pow-er of darkness and brought in- to the light
 of God's kingdom. Through the sac-ra-ment of bap-tism you have
 become a tem-ple of the Ho-ly Spir-it. Do not drive a-way so
 great a guest by e-vil conduct and become a-gain a slave to
 the dev-il, for your lib-er-ty was bought by the blood of Christ.

Tone for the patristic lesson of Christmas Vigils taken from a manuscript of the monastery of Maria Einsiedeln, as given in *Laudes Festivae: Lectionarium et Cantuarium pro Diversitate Temporum et Festum*, edited by P. Beatus Reiser, O.S.B., Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1932. Cantilation of the English text arranged by Fr. Samuel F. Weber, O.S.B., Copyright © 2009 Saint Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad, IN 47577-1010 U.S.A. All rights reserved.

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