

THE FIVE BOOKS OF THE PSALMS

The Psalms come from the collections of songs used in the temple of Jerusalem. Although tradition has it that David regulated the liturgy just as he composed all the psalms, it is more likely that the Levites—the “Sons of Asaph and Yedutun”—who were in charge of the sacred music of the temple, had a greater role in the writing and selection of the psalms. With the passage of time, the psalms took on an overlay of personal piety, collective lamentations and the expressions of another era.

As the prayer book of ancient Israel, the psalms fed Jewish piety as they did the prayer of Jesus. To this day, they form the foundation of Christian liturgical prayer used by countless religious, priests and deacons as well as an increasing number of laity.

Not all Christians may find in the psalms the fulfillment of their own aspirations, but adapting them for prayer, or better still, allowing them to educate and form one’s spiritual life may prove to be more valuable. If we are to enter into a conversation with God, we would benefit more by listening to Him and meditating his inspired words than by speaking of our own worries.

The Psalms have come through the ages as a powerful means of prayer. If they do not always satisfy our own sense of prayer, it is not necessarily a bad thing. If they manage to unbalance even slightly our ingrained habits of piety, that is not a small gift. These psalms may be capable of renewing our language and symbolism in a world where God is often a stranger and people would prefer to be left alone, to pursue their own interests.

The Psalms have been collected into five books as one can see from the endings of each book (cf. Ps 41, 72, 106). Within different collections one sometimes finds nearly identical Psalms and we can consider them as pairs.

The numbering of the psalms is slightly different in the Hebrew and Greek editions. We have used the Hebrew numbering and placed the Greek number in parenthesis—the ones most often used in our Latin Liturgy.

The Songs in the Scriptures

Together with the psalms we should also indicate other prayers which we find in most parts of the Scriptures and which we usually call “canticles”:

- of Moses: Ex 15
- 2nd of Moses: Dt 32
- of Anna: 1 S 2
- of Isaiah: Is 12
- of Hezekiah: Is 38
- of Habakkuk: Hb 3
- of the three servants: Dn 3:52
- of Tobit: Tb 13
- of Sirach: Sir 36
- of Mary: Lk 1:46
- of Zechariah: Lk 1:68
- of Simeon: Lk 2:29
- Ephesians: 1:3-14; 3:14-20
- Revelation: several passages
- See also 2 S 23; Ne 9:6; Is 26:7; 59; 63:7; Jer 20:7; Jdt 16:13; Wis 9:1; Sir 23:1; 51.

PSALMS



PSALM 1

Two ways of living.

¹Blessed is the man
who does not go where the wicked
gather,
or stand in the way of sinners,
or sit where the scoffers sit!

Jer 21:8;
Dt 30:15;
Pro 4:
18-19;
Mt 7:
13-14

²Instead, he finds delight in the law of
Yahweh
and meditates day and night
on his commandments.

Jos 1:8;
Ps 119

³He is like a tree beside a brook
producing its fruit in due season,
its leaves never withering.
Everything he does is a success.

Jer 17:8;
Ezk 19:
10-11;
Rev 22:2

⁴But it is different with the wicked.
They are like chaff
driven away by the wind.

Job
21:18;
Ps 35:5;
Is 40:24

⁵The wicked will not stand when
judgment comes,
nor the sinners when the righteous
assemble.

⁶For Yahweh knows the way of the
righteous
but cuts off the way of the wicked.

112:10

• **1.** The sharp contrast between the virtuous and the wicked is characteristic of the Hebrew thought and its uncompromising literary expression. The psalmist was conscious of the mixture of good and bad in himself and in others around him. As St. Paul said much later—and he spoke for everyone—‘I can want to do what is right, but I am unable to do it’ (Rom 7:18). Aware of this tension in ourselves, we recite this psalm with a feeling of hypocrisy. This is no proclamation of one’s own virtue but a constant self-reminder that we all have a choice. We may never reach the extremes either of virtue or of vice, but we are at every moment making for one or the other. It is salutary to remind ourselves what the end of each road is. It is better still to remember that we have a powerful companion along the virtuous road, but along the wicked one, we are alone.

PSALM 2**The Messianic kingship: warning to ruler and nations.**

110; Acts 4:25-26
 Rev 19:19; Ps 83:6
 149:8
 1 Why do the nations conspire?
 Why do the peoples plot in vain?
 2 The kings of the earth brace themselves
 and the rulers, together, take their stand
 against Yahweh and his anointed.
 3 They say, "Let us break their bonds!
 Let us cast away their chains!"

Is 40: 15...23; Ps 59:9
 4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
 Yahweh looks at them in derision.
 5 Then in anger he speaks to them,
 terrifying them in the fury of his wrath:
 6 "Behold the king I have installed,
 in Zion, upon my holy hill!"

2S 7:14; Ps 89:27; Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5
 Gen 12:7; Is 49:6; Dn 7:14
 7 I will proclaim the decree of Yahweh.
 He said to me: "You are my son.
 This day I have begotten you.
 8 Ask of me, and I will give you
 the nations for your inheritance;
 the ends of the earth, for your possession.

110:5; Rev 19:15; 2:26-27
 Wis 6:1
 9 You shall rule them with iron scepter
 and shatter them as a potter's vase."
 10 Now therefore, learn wisdom, O kings;
 be warned, O rulers of the earth.
 11 Serve Yahweh with fear
 and fall at his feet;
 lest he be angry; and you perish
 when his anger suddenly flares.
 Blessed are all who take refuge in him!

34:9; Pro 16:20

PSALM 3**Confidence under persecution: a morning prayer.**

2S 15:13
 2 O Yahweh, how great in number are my foes!
 How numerous are they who rise against me!
 3 How many are they who say of my soul:
 "There is no help for him in God!"

18:3; D:33:29; Ps 62:6; 27:6; 110:7; Sir 11:13
 4 But you are my shield, O Yahweh,
 my glory; you lift up my head.

Pro 3:24; Ps 4:9
 23:4; 27:1
 5 Aloud I cry to Yahweh,
 and from his holy Hill he answers me.
 6 If I lie down to sleep,
 again I awake, for Yahweh supports me;
 7 no fear of the thousands standing against me.

• 2 Temple and palace stood side by side on Zion. God's arm supported the scepter of the anointed Davidic king, his 'Christ'. On this same hill our Lord declared himself both Temple and King—shrine of the Godhead and ruler of the world. The earliest Church, therefore, seized upon our psalm: 'Jesus is the victorious anointed of David's stock' (Acts 4:25ff); he rules 'with an iron rod... and on his armor is written King of kings' (Rev 19:15-16). The victory is won not by this world's kings (by Antipas and Pilate), not by the 'princes' or leaders of Israel, but by the one they crucified (Acts 4:26-27) who initially was proclaimed: "You are my Son. This day I have begotten you" (Mt 3:17; Mt 17:5 and Lk 3:22). The persecution of Christians and the passion of Christ are one and the same (Acts 4:29), and the victory of resurrection is equally assured. On Christian lips, our psalm is a song of defiance of the spirit in the name of God and trust in our sure refuge.

• 3 The 'enemies' are always trying to undermine the psalmist's trust in God. The psalmist sees their political or personal hostility as a test of his confidence in the shield that protects him. It follows that though we and the psalmist have different enemies we are fighting in a common cause: to keep the supply-lines open between God and ourselves. Difficulties from outside us and struggles within are not in themselves good things: they are only good challenges, opportunities, or urgent invitations to turn

to the only place where help is to be found.

The psalm has a Christian projection in the exhortation of Jesus: "Do not be afraid. I have conquered the world" (Jn 16:33). No matter what the odds against him, with his undeniable faith in God, the Christian will be a winner. The believer will thus be able to face the present-day adversities.

• **4** To forget to thank, may be bad, but to refuse to ask is a thousand times worse, indeed fatal. This psalmist will not make that mistake: he has learnt by experience. The happiness and peace he knows are lasting and satisfying. He has found his comfort zone in the Lord. No matter what trials and tribulations he faces, he is at peace with himself and the Lord. Few understand this: the celebrations of harvest-time seem to content them. There is no harm in these things—they are the gifts of God and we enjoy them gratefully. Our mistake is in thinking they can satisfy. To be at peace with God is to be at peace with oneself.

Trust and even joy are possible in the midst of trials (cf. 2 Cor 7:4; Gal 5:22; 1 Thess 1:6). Jesus in Mathew 5:22 to 26, tells us to reconcile quickly if we get angry, to prevent any unwanted consequences.

Like the psalmist, if we wish to sleep well at night, it is best not to take our anger to bed with us.

• **5** By the mercy of God every new day brings fresh hope to most of us. It would seem that the psalmist has been falsely accused of some crime. He prays for protection from the wicked and hopes that today, at last, the accusers will be exposed. In this

⁸ Arise, O Yahweh!
 Deliver me, O my God!
 You strike all my enemies on the jaw,
 you have broken the teeth of the wicked.
⁹ Salvation comes from Yahweh.
 May your blessing be upon your people!

7:7;
 9:20;
 58:7

PSALM 4

Night prayer.

² Answer when I call, O God, my justice!
 When I was in distress, you gave me solace.
 Have compassion on me and hear my plea.

³ And you, people, how long
 will you harden your hearts?
 How long will you delight in deceit
 and go in search of falsehood?

⁴ But you must know that Yahweh
 has shown his kindness to me.
 When I call to him, he hears me.

⁵ Be angry, but don't offend.
 Keep your words to yourself,
 when you are in bed, and be still.

Eph 4:26

⁶ Offer the sacrifice commanded by the law
 and put your trust in Yahweh, your God.

51:21

⁷ Many ask, "Who will give us a happy time?
 Would, that his favor shine upon us!"

Num
 6:25;
 Pro
 16:15;
 Dn 9:17

⁸ You, O Yahweh, have put joy in my heart;
 more than by giving me wine and food.

⁹ I lie down and sleep in peace,
 for you, alone, O Yahweh,
 make me feel safe and secure.

3:6

PSALM 5

Morning prayer.

² O Yahweh, listen to my words and hear my
 complaint,

86:6;
 84:4

³ give heed to my sighs, my King and my
 God.

⁴ From daybreak you hear my voice, from
 dawn I am in your presence, watching for you.

⁵You are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil has no place in you.

Pro 6:
16-19;
Mt 7:23;
Rev 21:8

⁶The arrogant cannot stand before you. You hate all who do evil;

⁷you destroy all who speak falsehood, who thirst for blood and live on lies; all of them Yahweh detests.

138:2;
1K 8:
44, 48;
Dn 6:11

⁸But I, by your love and grace, may come into your house. In reverence, I bow down and worship at your holy temple.

23:3;
Is 26:7

⁹Lead me, O Yahweh, through your path of righteousness; make your way straight before me, for my enemies lie in wait.

Rom
3:13

¹⁰Not a word of their mouth can be trusted, for their heart is full of mischief. Their tongue flatters with deceit, but their throat is an open grave.

¹¹O Yahweh, make them pay for their guilt. Let their snares trap them. Cast them out for their many sins—for their offense and rebellion.

69:37;
119:132

¹²But for those who take refuge in you, let them ever sing and rejoice. Let your deliverance shield them, that they may praise you in gladness—those who love your name, O Yahweh.

¹³You praise all who live in righteousness; your favor covers them as a shield.

PSALM 6

Prayer in time of distress: first psalm of repentance.

Jer
10:24;
Ps 38:2

²O Yahweh, in your anger do not reprove; nor punish me in your fury.

Jer 17:
14-15

³Have mercy on me, O Yahweh, for I have no strength left. O Yahweh, heal me, for my bones are in torment.

⁴My soul also is greatly troubled. How long, O Yahweh, how long? How long will you be?

⁵Come back to me, O Yahweh, save my life; rescue me for the sake of your love.

Is 38:18;
Ps 88:
11-13

⁶For no one remembers you in the grave; who will praise you in the world of the dead?

⁷I am weary with moaning; I weep every night, drenching my bed with tears.

⁸My eyes have grown dim from troubles; I have weakened, because of my foes.

119:115;
Mt 7:23

⁹Away from me, you evildoers, for Yahweh has heard my plaintive voice.

¹⁰Yahweh has heard my plea; Yahweh will grant all that I pray for.

hope he goes to the Temple to watch and wait for God to intervene. The enemies of God's servants are God's enemies: God will see to them. They may deceive human judges with their honeyed words but not God. He sees their bitterness and the corruption inside. If we are thoughtful, such indictments as these make us uneasy. In them, we often find a portrait of ourselves. At last, this consideration is a good general approach to what we might call the 'hostile' psalms.

Goodness is one of the classic attributes of God (cf. Ex 36:4). Let us place our cause into God's hands, since Christ has gone into the sanctuary once and for all (cf. Heb 9:12).

The psalmist prays for protection from the wicked. Indeed, there are many who choose wicked ways in this world. But God is love, and the psalmist realizes this and bows down in reverence to the Lord.

• **6** This and 'penitential' Psalm 37 are very similar but here, there is not the same frank confession of guilt. There is indeed no mention of it and the term 'penitential,' though traditional, seems scarcely applicable. The 'anger' and 'rage' of God, like his 'forsaking,' may be conventional metaphors of the psalmist's suffering. At this stage of revelation there is no hope of praising God beyond the grave. The conclusion should be clear: death would deprive God of one of his servants. The implication is almost impertinent, that God will be the loser if the psalmist dies. Can we threaten God in our private prayers? We suppose not, but some inspired authors come very near to it. Anyway, let us not be too scrupulous: the psalmist allows God to speak and acknowledges that God has answered his prayers.

God knows how awkward we are and that we mean well. He is a Father, not a literary critic.

The letter to the Hebrews mentions the cries and tears of Jesus in Hebrews 5:7. This is an apt psalm to cry for our sins.

• **7** We have no difficulty with the opening of this psalm but the confident claim of innocence that follows it, is frightening. We prefer to invoke God's mercy rather than invite his strict scrutiny. But perhaps we have no cause for misgiving. A Christian may confidently boast that he or she is 'just' because the righteousness that is the property of God alone is truly and internally communicated to the Christian. In Christ himself, the righteousness of God appears and becomes available to those who have access by faith and baptism to the power of Christ's resurrection. This is the 'justness' we can boast of when we sing this psalm: 'Let those who boast, boast in the Lord.'

When we dream about a more just society, while deathly violence surrounds us, we can pray with this psalm, aware that justice will prevail and in gratitude we sing praises to the Lord.

¹¹Let my enemies fall back in shame, all of a sudden—the whole bunch of them!

PSALM 7

Appeal to God's justice.

²O Yahweh, my God, in you I take shelter; deliver me, and save me from all my pursuers, ³lest lions tear me to pieces, with no one to rescue me.

⁴O Yahweh, my God, if my hands are stained with guilt—⁵if with evil, I have repaid good, if I have plundered unjustly my opponent, ⁶let the enemy hound me; let him crush me to the ground and lay down my liver in the dust.

⁷Arise, O Yahweh, in your wrath; rise up against the fury of my foes. Awake, O my God, and judge the nations, for the time of judgment has come.

⁸Let the nations gather around you; and you take your seat high above them.

⁹Proclaim, O Yahweh, my righteousness; you see, that I am blameless.

¹⁰Bring to an end the power of the wicked, ^{Jer 11:20} but affirm the just, O righteous God, searcher of mind and heart.

¹¹You cover me as a shield, Oh God, for you protect the upright. ^{3:4}

¹²A righteous judge is God, his anger ever awaiting those who refuse to repent. ^{34:6-7}

¹³God has his sword ready and sharpened; his bow bent and arrows aimed.

¹⁴He has in hand, always ready, his deadly weapons and fiery darts. ^{Is 50:11}

¹⁵Look at the one who conceived iniquity and is pregnant with mischief: miscarriage will result. ^{Is 59:4; Job 15:35}

¹⁶He digs a pit and makes it deep; he will fall into the trap he made. ^{9:16; 35:8}

¹⁷His evil intent recoils upon his head; his wicked design comes back in his face. ^{Job 4:8; Sir 27: 25-27}

¹⁸I will rejoice in Yahweh for his justice; and sing to the Most High in gratitude and praise.

PSALM 8**Man the viceroy of God.**

19:2-3; 104
²O Yahweh, our Yahweh,
 how great is your name throughout the earth!
 And your glory in the heavens above.

Mt 21:16; 11:25
³Even the mouths of children and infants
 exalt your glory in front of your foes
 and put to shame enemies and rebels.

⁴When I observe the heavens,
 the work of your hands,
 the moon, and the stars you set in their place—
 144:3; Job 7: 17-18; Heb 2:6-9
⁵what is man, that you be mindful of him;
 the son of man, that you should care for him?

Gen 1:26; Sir 17: 1-4; Wis 2:23
⁶Yet you made him a little less than a god;
 you crowned him with glory and honor
⁷and gave him the works of your hands;
 1Cor 15:27
 you have put all things under his feet—

⁸sheep and oxen without number,
 and even the beasts of the field,
⁹the birds of the air, the fish of the sea,
 and all that swim the paths of the ocean.

¹⁰O Yahweh, our Yahweh,
 how great is your name all over the earth!

PSALM 9**Gratitude and appeal: an alphabetical psalm.**

138:1
²Let my heart give thanks to Yahweh, I yearn
 to proclaim your marvelous deeds, ³and rejoice
 and exult in you; and sing praise to your name,
 O Most High.

7:9, 12; 89:15
⁴For my enemies fell back in retreat, they
 stumbled and perished before you. ⁵You have
 upheld my right and my cause, you have sen-
 tenced from your throne, O just judge.

⁶You have turned back the nations; you have
 destroyed the wicked; you have blotted out their
 names forever.

Gen 10: 23-25
⁷Your enemies lay in endless ruin, their cities
 trampled, their memory perished.

⁸But Yahweh reigns forever, having set up his
 throne for judgment.

96:13; 98:9
⁹He will judge the nations with justice and gov-
 ern the peoples in righteousness.

Is 25:4; Ps 37:39
¹⁰Yahweh is a rampart for the oppressed, a ref-
 uge in times of distress.

• **8** This psalm is a lyrical reflection on the making and endowment of man: 'Let us make man in our own image... let him have dominion over the fish, the birds, the beasts' (Gen 1:26). He is little less than a god because he has a share in God's dominion. He is much greater than the stars because, child though he is before the Eternal God, he has a voice for praise.

Everything speaks to us about God, whose Name is admirable, just as his works are. It is a child-like adequate language to praise our great Master (cf. Mt 21:16). See how the apostles apply to Jesus the words of this psalm: Matthew 21:16; 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:22; Hebrews 2:6-8. No one can build himself if he has not yet sought his mission in the world. We are nothing without our brothers and sisters who struggle or vegetate in the anthills of the entire world. Wherever there is a human being, he or she is tenderly cared for by God (v. 5). This psalm can be sung as a celebration of human dignity and divine greatness.

• **9** If God can handle the stars, then he has no difficulties in managing the human enemies of the psalmist. The Israelite never doubted this but sometimes we suspect that he thinks God is too patient altogether. 'Lord, are we to order fire down from heaven to burn them up?' This is the reaction of earlier days to the enemies of God; but Jesus rebukes James and John (Lk 9:54-55). Nevertheless, we have to admire the confidence in the power and vigilance of a child, sure of his father's strength. We must wait, we may die waiting: God seems to take no notice. In ourselves and in the world around us, truth and goodness always seem to be at a disadvantage: the fall of the dice is against them. But God has the last throw and faith stands by the table watching him.

The psalmist did not have the teachings of Jesus whose words

would have brought him comfort, but we do. Therefore, we too could find ourselves in situations as expressed in verses 2 to 5 and not know what to do. However, in answer Jesus in Mathew 5:44 says, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

The psalm is adequate to give thanks to God for his presence in the struggles and victories of the people or of groups who work for justice.

¹¹Those who cherish your name, O Yahweh, 36:11
can rely on you, for you have never forsaken
those who look to you.

¹²Sing praises to Yahweh, enthroned in Zion;
proclaim his deeds among the nations.

¹³For he who avenges blood remembers, he Job 16:18
does not ignore the cry of the lowly.

¹⁴Have mercy on me, O Yahweh. See how they Wis 16:13
afflict me. Oh, lift me up from the gates of death,
¹⁵that I may declare your praise; that I may
rejoice in your salvation in the gates of Zion.

¹⁶The pagans have sunk into the pit they have 7:16
dug, their own feet ensnared by the trap they laid.

¹⁷Yahweh has shown his presence. He has
judged and the wicked plotters have been
trapped, by the work of their hands.

¹⁸To the netherworld the wicked will depart, all 50:22
the nations that have no thought of God.

¹⁹For the needy will not always be forgotten, Pro 23:18
nor the hope of the poor perish forever.

²⁰Rise, O Yahweh! Do not let mortals prevail; 7:7
let the nations stand on trial before you.

²¹Bring terror, O Yahweh, strike at them; let 10:18
these pagans realize that they are but humans.

PSALM 10 (9)

Continuation of the preceding psalm.

• **10** Psalms 9 and 10 of the Hebrew text may have been originally a single acrostic poem. The stanzas begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In the Greek or Latin Bible, they constitute one psalm. Psalm 9 denounces the enemies of Israel. In Psalm 10 the psalmist is fully aware of all the wickedness and evil that surrounds him. He is also aware that these people seem to be secure, powerful and happy. He denounces the wicked within the community. Those who exploit the widow and the orphan, the foreigner and the traveler, are in fact enemies of God. It is very easy to become rich in spirit in a consumer world. As Christians we must ask ourselves to what extent should we be responsible for the injustice and discrimination which we witness.

The psalmist is fully aware of

¹Why, O Yahweh, do you stand afar? Why 22: 74:1
hide from us in times of distress?

²The wicked are in power; the weak suffer harass-
ment; the poor become victims of evil schemes.

³Exploiters boast in their power and greed; the 10:13
covetous blasphemers and defies God.

⁴In their pride the wicked say, "There is no Job 22:13; 36:2
God." They see no further.

⁵The wicked prosper in their ways, your laws
are far from their minds; haughtily they sneer
at their rivals, ⁶all of them saying in their heart,
"Nothing will trouble me. I am secure, powerful
and happy."

⁷Their mouths are filled with cursing, deceit Rom 3:14
and threats; spite and mischief are under their
tongues.

⁸They lie in ambush near the villages, mur-
dering the innocent and the unfortunate, spying
upon their next victim.

17:12;
Hos 6:9;
Ps 140:6

⁹The evil one lurks in secret, like a lion in its covert, waiting to seize his prey and drag him off in a net.

¹⁰Lying prone or crouching, he waits; and the unfortunate falls into his power.

44:25;
73:11;
94:7;
Ezk 9:9;
Job 22:13

¹¹He thinks to himself: "God has forgotten; he has hidden his face and will never see this."

¹²Rise, Yahweh, O God, raise your hand, do not forget the lowly.

¹³Why do the wicked revile God and say, "He cannot make me account"?

¹⁴But you see those in misery, O God, and you take it in hand. The unfortunate commits himself to you; the orphan turns to you for help.

¹⁵Break the power of the wicked—seek out their wickedness, till there is none to be found.

29:10;
145:13;
146:10

¹⁶Yahweh is king forever and the pagans have vanished from his land.

¹⁷For you hear, O Yahweh, the longings of the lowly, and you strengthen their hearts; ¹⁸you give heed to the orphans and the oppressed. Let no human raise from earth and strike terror.

PSALM 11 (10)

The security of God's friends: a psalm of confidence.

7:2;
141:8

¹In Yahweh I take refuge.
How, then, can you say to me,
"Flee to the mountains like a bird;

37:14

²for the wicked are bending their bows and fit their arrows to the string. They get ready to shoot in the dark, they take aim at the upright of heart.

³When foundations fall to ruin, what can the righteous do?"

5:8;
Hb 2:20;
Ps 2:4;
103:19;
102:20

⁴Yahweh is in his holy place—our God whose throne is in heaven. He looks down to earth to observe the race of Adam.

⁵Yahweh searches both righteous and wicked. He hates those who delight in violence.

Gen 19:24;
Ezk 38:22;
Rev 20:9-10

⁶Upon the wicked, he will rain coals of fire and brimstone; a burning blast will be their lot.

75:9;
Is 51:17-22;
Jer 25:15

⁷For Yahweh is righteous; he loves justice. The upright will see his face.

all the wickedness and evil that surrounds him. He is also aware that these people seem to be secure, powerful and happy. Yet, he does not fall a prey to their evil ways. Instead, he is sure that God will not forsake him and will deal with them accordingly.

This psalm can bring comfort to many of us who find ourselves in the midst of such people and wonder how they can carry on the way they do. Perhaps we can take comfort in the words of Adolph Dias who wrote this verse: "If you think that your neighbor has more happiness than you, think again, you may know only about their happiness, not their suffering and pain."

When we see that human pride prevails, at the expense of the innocent ones and God keeps silent, it is a good time to pray with this psalm.

• **11 (10)** This is another picturesque variation of the theme of trust in God. The psalmist is confident that the righteous will meet God face to face and chooses not to let the wicked trouble him instead. The hunters are out again, but the psalmist is already away to the refuge he knows so well, every cranny of it, the mountain, which is God. What else can he do, when all the rest that seemed dependable, has collapsed? Perhaps the attitude is as grudging as Peter's "To whom shall we go?". Doubtless, our own motives are never unmixed: something creative has disappointed us and we turn to the Creator. Strangely enough, he seems to be satisfied with this: he runs to us, undignified like the Prodigal's father. Shall we ever understand how humble God's love is? Even the form of a servant was not enough, unless it hung on a cross!

• **12 (11)** The ‘truth’ of God is a sure guide along the uncertain way of life. The psalmist knows that there is no substitute to truth and so places his entire trust in God. ‘Your commands are a light to me feet.’ He complains, not of their tendency to lie, but of their unreliability. Hollow boasting can persuade the less thoughtful that a quagmire is solid ground. The psalmists often denounce it. They find solidity only in God. God’s promises are always fulfilled: Israel’s past proves it and her future will confirm it.

The Lord has the words of eternal life (Jn 6:68). For as long as human relationships are not built on truth, this psalm will have to be prayed.

• **13 (12)** It seems that the friends of God are able to take liberties. Indeed, they can be peremptory, to the point of rudeness. One may suppose that they see less danger in presumption, than in despair. No doubt they are right! Moreover, there is an undertone in this psalm that we hear elsewhere: that the defeat of God’s friends is a reflection of God himself. With such pious cunning, we may hope, God is content. In fact, the death and resurrection of Christ, who bore our sins, is God’s admission that the triumph of sin would have affronted his own honor. And so we pray to God to safeguard his own honor in ourselves. We seem to be the custodians of it, and yet only from God himself do we have the strength to guard it. This was not the psalm that Jesus began on the cross, but it might equally well have been.

PSALM 12 (11)

Truth in a world of lies.

²Help us, O Yahweh, none of the godly are left, Mic 7:2
the faithful have vanished. ³Everyone lies; with Jer9:2-8
flattering lips they speak from a double heart.

⁴May Yahweh cut off insincere lips, every glib 31:19
tongue that utters deceit.

⁵Many say, “Our strength lies in our tongue, we know how to speak, who will Yahweh it over us?”

⁶“The poor are despoiled and the needy suffer, Is 33:10
now I will save them,” says Yahweh. “I will give them security.”

⁷The promises of Yahweh are sure and last- 18:31;
ing—silver refined in the furnace seven times Pro 30:5
and freed from dross.

⁸Hold us, O Yahweh, in your keeping; protect us always from this generation, ⁹for the wicked prowl on all sides, and the basest are exalted.

PSALM 13 (12)

Prayer of a person in anxiety.

²How long, O Yahweh, will you forget me and hide your face from me?

³How long must I suffer pain in my soul and grief in my heart all the day long?
How long shall my enemy triumph over me?

⁴Look upon me and answer, O Yahweh my God!
Give light to my eyes,
lest I sleep the sleep of death;

⁵lest my enemy say, 38:17
“I have routed him,”
lest my foes rejoice of my fall.

⁶But I put my trust in your unfailing love, 52:10
my heart will rejoice on seeing your salvation.
I will sing to Yahweh,
for he has been good to me!

6:4;
89:47;
Lm 5:20;
Ps 10:11;
27:9;
30:8

PSALM 14 (13)**The fools.**

- 53 ¹The fool says in his heart,
“God does not exist.”
All have strayed, all are perverted,
there is no one who does good.
- 102:20 ²Yahweh looks down from heaven
upon the race of Adam,
to see if there are any
who seek God and act wisely.
- Rom 3:
11-12 ³They have all turned aside:
corrupt—all of them alike.
- 76:6-7 ⁴Will they ever learn—these doers of evil?
For they devour my people,
—that is their food—
and do not call upon Yahweh.
- 48:6-7;
46:6 ⁵But suddenly terror strikes them:
God was on the side of the just!
- 46:2 ⁶You may confound the hope of the poor,
but Yahweh is their refuge.
- 85:2;
126:1-4 ⁷Oh would, that I see
Israel’s salvation coming from Zion!
When Yahweh brings home the exiles,
what joy it will be for Jacob,
what happiness for Israel!

PSALM 15 (14)**Who shall abide in God’s sanctuary?**

- 24:3-6;
Is 33:
14-16 ¹O Yahweh, who will dwell in your tent
and reside on your holy mount?
- Ezk
18:5-9 ²Those who walk blamelessly
and do what is right,
who speak truth from their heart
³and control their words,
who do no harm to their neighbors
and cast no discredit on their companions,
⁴who look down on evildoers
but highly esteem God’s servants;
who, at all costs, stand by a pledged word,
⁵who do not lend money at interest
and refuse a bribe against the innocent.
- 22:24;
23:8;
Ps 16:8;
30:7 ⁶Do this, and you will not be shaken.

• **14 (13)** The ‘fool’ in the Scriptures is neither an ignorant nor a theoretical atheist. Agnosticism is a phenomenon apparently unknown to the Old Testament writers living in a polytheistic world. He is one who has his values all wrong and is encouraged by past experience, to behave as if God would never take action. The world, murmurs the psalmist, is full of people like this. But their time will come: God will save his people from them whether they are traitors to Israel or enemies from outside. We, for our part, should never count ourselves exempt from Scriptural denunciations. How often, for example, have we thought ‘I thank God; I am not as this Pharisee?’ No, we are ‘foolish’ too! The traitor inside us, establishes his own convenient hierarchy of values. In this psalm, as in so many others, we pray God to destroy what is worst in our own selves.

• **15 (14)** Beyond the image of the Temple, the believer pines to be with God, to be one with God. Those who harbor this passionate desire, expressed as a question (v. 1) must be honest, sincere and upright (vv. 2-3). These are the three general conditions. The following three conditions (v. 3b) are related to the conduct toward one’s neighbor. Those who wish to be with God, must be on the side of the friends of God, against the enemies of God who have been rebuked by God—and respect the covenant that consecrates the promised action (v. 4). These three actions join God and neighbor together. Two other actions have an economic-legal reach (v. 5). Keeping these commandments without the perfume of love is just mechanical fulfillment.

• **16 (15)** So much lip-service is paid to the one God and so much activity to the gods we make for ourselves. Only thoughtful experience can show how hollow these are. The offerings we make pay no return but a frenzy to offer more. But perhaps this experience is necessary for many of us. It may not lead to the high mysticism of the psalmist. If we learn to turn away and look for a while towards the more lasting good, we may find it more satisfying after all. Appetite may grow from what it feeds on. There is even a presentiment in this psalm, that such a union with God, will prove stronger than death, and in Christ it did. The risen Lord, so closely united with his Father, descended to the place of death and came out freely, ascending with his spoils. Nor can death resist his Body, which is the Church. He promised that the gates of death would not withstand it. Death, 'the last enemy,' is destroyed. The resurrection of our bodies is guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ.

Loyalty to God does not mean hostility toward those who follow another religion. This loyalty asks of us, on the contrary, to look more closely at our attachment to all the little gods, that encumber our life. Let us not sacrifice our Christian identity on the altar of money.

• **17 (16)** God is appealed to as a Judge. Few would dare to do this but the psalmist is sure of his worthiness. This assurance would be arrogant if there were no salutary self-mistrust—but there is. Indeed, it is a constant source of surprise for those who think of Judaism as a 'religion of works,' to find how often the responsibility is thrown to God. From the earliest days this responsibility has been perceived on a national scale. Only God could restore the fortunes of his people. But

PSALM 16 (15)

True happiness: a psalm of confidence.

¹Keep me safe, O God,
for in you I take refuge.

31:2

²I say to Yahweh,
"You are my Lord, my only good."

³The gods of the earth are but nothing,
cursed be those who delight in them.

⁴Those who run after foreign gods
only have their sorrows multiplied.

Jer 7:18;
23:13;
Hos 2:19;
Zec 13:2

Let me not shed blood for them,
nor their names be heard on my lips.

⁵O Yahweh, my inheritance and my cup,
my chosen portion—hold secure my lot.

Num
18:20

⁶The best part has been allotted to me.
Delightful indeed is my inheritance!

⁷I praise Yahweh who counsels me;
even at night, my inmost self instructs me.

⁸I keep Yahweh always before me;
for with him at my right hand,
I will never be shaken.

109:31;
Acts
2:25-28

⁹My heart, therefore, exults; my soul rejoices;
my body, too, will rest assured.

¹⁰For you will not abandon
my soul to the grave,

Acts
13:35

nor will you suffer your holy one
to see decay in the land of the dead.

¹¹You will show me the path of life,
in your presence, the fullness of joy,
at your right hand, happiness forever.

Pro 5:6;
15:24

PSALM 17 (16)

Appeal of an upright person.

¹Hear a just cause, O Yahweh,
listen to my complaint.
Give heed to my prayer,
for there is no deceit on my lips.

7:9;
26:1;
61:2

²Let my defense come forth from you;
your eyes see what is right.

³You have probed my heart,
searched me at night,
tested me by fire,

7:10;
139:
1-3, 23;
Job 7:18

and you have seen no wickedness in me.

Job
23:12 ⁴I have not sinned by my words
as others do;
I have kept your word
and followed your ways.

⁵Hold firm my steps upon your path,
that my feet may not stumble.

⁶I call on you, you will answer me, O God;
incline your ear and hear my word.

⁷For you do wonders for your faithful,
you save those fleeing from the enemy
as they seek refuge at your right hand.

Dt 32:10;
Ps 36:8;
57:2;
61:5;
63:8 ⁸Keep me as the apple of your eye;
under the shadow of your wings hide me,

⁹far from my violent pursuers,
from the onslaught of the wicked despoilers.

¹⁰Their mouths speak arrogantly;
they have shut their hearts to mercy.

¹¹Now they surround me and track me down,
their eyes eager to see me overthrown.

10:9 ¹²Like lions made fierce by hunger,
they want only to kill and tear.

¹³Arise, O Yahweh, confront them, overthrow
them!

May your sword deliver me from the wicked.

¹⁴O Yahweh, strike them with your hand
and give them no share with the living.
May their belly be filled
with what you have stored for them,
and their children have more than enough
to leave to their descendants.

11:7;
Rev
22:4 ¹⁵As for me, righteous in your sight,
I shall see your face and, awakening,
gaze my fill on your likeness.

PSALM 18 (17)

David's gratitude for victory.

²I love you, O Yahweh, my strength.

31:3-4;
144:2;
Dt 32:4 ³Yahweh is my rock, my fortress,
my deliverer and my God.

He is the rock in whom I take refuge.

He is my shield, my powerful savior, my
stronghold.

⁴I call on Yahweh, who is worthy of praise: he
saves me from my enemies!

in this individual lament, as in so many others, God is asked to do all the work, not for the nation but for the lonely psalmist. We are very near to the true conception of what we call 'grace,' to the idea of a God without whom we can do nothing and in whose strength we can do everything.

The Psalmist in living in righteousness, justly asks God for His protection and the eternal reward of seeing God's face. Jesus has assured us of a treasure in heaven in Mathew 19:21, when we follow all the commandments and become Christ-like.

• **18 (17)** Here, a picture of God, as the great master of creation, appears side by side with that of God, as the jealous guardian of his servant David, who was king enough to serve the King of kings. For once we have no difficulties identifying the 'enemies.' The stormy history of David is well known to us. But the historical situation will

not help. Again we have to take the words to ourselves, and the 'enemies' we pray against have intangible arrows. We need the shield of God and all the warlike but spiritual apparatuses that St. Paul asks for: 'the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, that is, the Word of God' (Eph 6:16-17).

The opening words "I love you" sums up the psalmist's true inner feelings. Jesus whom the psalmist divinely refers to in verse 10, "He bent the heavens and came down," has told us that what comes out of the heart of a person makes a person clean or unclean, so those clean inner feelings come from the heart. Again, reference is made to Jesus in verse 29, "Lord, you give light to my lamp" because Jesus had said, "I am the light of the world."

The added verse (51) allows us to apply this psalm to the Anointed One, to Christ, conqueror of death and the abyss. Romans 15:9 quotes verse 50 of the psalm. Those who love passionately, do not cease to coin new adjectives, to proclaim their love. The God thus loved, "comes down" to be with us, as the sure rock of our existence.

- ⁵ A deadly flood surrounded me, 116:3
 devilish torrents rushed at me;
- ⁶ caught by the cords of the grave, Pro
13:14;
14:27
 I was brought to the snares of death.
- ⁷ But I called upon Yahweh in my distress,
 I cried to my God for help; and from his temple
 he heard my voice,
 my cry of grief reached his ears.
- ⁸ Then the earth reeled and rocked; 19:16,18;
Hb33-13
 the foundations of the mountains shook;
 they trembled at his fury.
- ⁹ Smoke rose from his nostrils,
 from his mouth, a devouring fire
 throwing off live embers.
- ¹⁰ He bent the heavens and came down 144:5
 with dark clouds under his feet.
- ¹¹ He rode on a cherub and flew, 104:3
 borne on the swift wings of the wind.
- ¹² Veiled, with darkness surrounding him, 97:2;
Dt 4:11
 he made misty rain clouds his tent.
- ¹³ Then, from the brightness of his presence,
 hail and fiery embers broke forth.
- ¹⁴ From heaven Yahweh thundered; 29;
77:18-19
 the voice of the Most High resounded.
- ¹⁵ Sending out a hail of arrows, he scattered them; 144:6
 flashing forth bolts of lightning, he routed them.
- ¹⁶ The beds of the seas appeared, 15:8
 the foundations of the world were laid bare
 at the rebuke of Yahweh,
 at the blast of his breath.
- ¹⁷ Reaching down from above,
 he drew me out of the deep waters.
- ¹⁸ Too strong for me were my enemies, 142:7
 but he rescued me from my adversaries.
- ¹⁹ They launched their attack on an opportune day,
 but Yahweh was my support.
- ²⁰ He has set me out in the open,
 he saved me, because he cares for me!
- ²¹ Yahweh rewarded me for my justice,
 according to my righteousness.
- ²² For I have been faithful to Yahweh's way
 and have not departed from my God.
- ²³ All his ordinances are before me,
 I have always followed his statutes.
- ²⁴ Before him, I have done uprightly,
 and kept myself from iniquity.

²⁵Yahweh treats me according to my merits,
according to the cleanness of my hands.

²⁶With the faithful, you are faithful;
with the blameless, you are blameless;

²⁷with the pure, you are pure; but with the
crooked you are astute.

²⁸For you raise up the humble
and bring down the arrogant.

²⁹Lord, you give light to my lamp.

O my God, you brighten my darkness.

³⁰Yes, with you, I charge the armed bands,
and by my God, I leap over the wall.

³¹This God—his way is perfect;
the word of Yahweh can stand fire.

He is a shield for those who seek refuge in him.

³²There is no other God but Yahweh.

³³There is no other rock but our God.

³⁴He is the God who girds me with strength
and prepares my ways.

³⁵He makes my feet as swift as the deer's;
he sets me securely on the heights.

³⁶He trains my hands for war
and my arms to bend the bronze-bow.

³⁷You give me your shield for protection,
your right hand upholds me;
and your help makes me great.

³⁸You enlarge the space before me,
my step will not falter.

³⁹I pursue my enemies and overtake them,
I do not turn back, till I have destroyed them.

⁴⁰Thrusting them through,
I do not give them time to rise;
they fall under my feet.

⁴¹You give me strength for the battle;
you subdue my adversaries beneath me;

⁴²you put my enemies to flight
and destroy those who hate me.

⁴³They cry for help, but no one comes.
They cry to Yahweh; he does not answer them.

⁴⁴I pulverize them, as dust before the wind;
like mud in the streets, I trample them.

⁴⁵You delivered me from my people's quarrels
and made me head over the nations.

They came to serve me—people I have not known.

⁴⁶At the sound of my voice, they rose to obey,
foreigners fawned before me.

⁴⁶Staggering out of their fortresses,
they came to me, cringing and trembling.

⁴⁷Yahweh lives! Praised be my rock!
Exalted be my savior God—

⁴⁸the God who grants me vengeance
and subdues the peoples for me.

⁴⁹He delivers me from my foes;
he exalts me above my adversaries;
he rescues me from violent people.

⁵⁰For this I extol you, O Yahweh, among the
nations;

I will sing praise to your name, saying:

⁵¹“He has given victories to his king;
he has shown his love to his anointed ones,
to David, and to his descendants forever.”

47:4

Rom
15:9

89:5, 30

PSALM 19 (18)

Praise of God, creator and lawgiver.

• **19 (18)** The abrupt change in rhythm in the middle of the psalm, together with the apparent change of subject, perhaps, means that we have two psalms in one. The fact is the two parts have the word of God as a common theme. There is nature’s message of God’s beauty, which is no less audible for being inarticulate and then, for Israel, the message of his specific will which the Law contains. For both of these, we must show admiration and respect. When nature seems harsh and the law constricts us, faith must carry us through. When this is the case for others, charity must work in us, to help or sympathize.

The splendor of heaven gives us a glimpse of the glory of God. We are also aware of his presence, when we meditate on his commandments, which are light and joy for the soul.

Romans 10:18 applies verse 4 of the psalm to the preaching of the Gospel. This psalm is adequate to revise one’s life in the presence of God in creation and in the Law. Jesus in the Gospels has taught us how to pray. If we add this psalm to our morning prayer, it will make us feel great and ready to start the day well.

²The heavens declare the glory of God;
the firmament proclaims the work of his hands.

³Day talks it over with day;
night hands on the knowledge to night.

⁴No speech, no words, no voice is heard—

⁵but the call goes on, throughout the universe,
the message is felt to the ends of the earth.

⁶High above, he pitched a tent for the sun,
who comes out as a bridegroom from his
pavilion,

or like a racer joyfully runs his course.

⁷Rising from one end,
it makes its circuit of the heavens,
and sets at the other end;
and nothing is hidden from its heat.

⁸The law of Yahweh is perfect:
it gives life to the soul.

The word of Yahweh is trustworthy:
it gives wisdom to the simple.

⁹The precepts of Yahweh are right:
they give joy to the heart.
The commandments of Yahweh are clear:
they enlighten the eyes.

¹⁰The fear of Yahweh is pure,
it endures forever;
the judgments of Yahweh are true,
all of them just and right.

50:6;
89:6;
97:6;
Rom
1:20

Rom
10:18;
Sir 43:
1-5

12:7;
Jas 1:27

119:127;
119:103 11 They are more precious than gold—
pure gold of a jeweler;
they are much sweeter than honey
which drops from the honeycomb.

12 They are a light to your servant,
in keeping them, they win a great reward.

13 But who can discern one's own errors?
Forgive the failings of which I am unaware.

14 Preserve me from willful sin;
do not let it get the better of your servant.
Then shall I walk blameless
and innocent of serious sin.

15 May the words of my mouth
and the meditations of my heart
find favor in your sight,
O Yahweh—my redeemer, my rock!

PSALM 20 (19)

Prayer for a king before battle.

2 May Yahweh answer you in the day of distress;
may the name of Jacob's God give you
protection.

2:6 3 May he send you help from the Sanctuary
and give you support from Mount Zion.

4 May he remember all your oblations
and look favorably on your burnt offerings.

5 May he grant you your heart's desire
and fulfill all your plans.

6 In your victory let us shout for joy
and raise our banner in the name of our God.
May Yahweh grant all your requests.

18:51 7 Now I know, that Yahweh saves his anointed;
he has answered him from his holy heaven
with victories from his right hand.

33:16-
17;
147:10;
Hos 1:7 8 Some boast of chariots, some of horses;
but we boast in the name of Yahweh our God.

9 Their forces will collapse and be crushed,
but ours shall rise, and stand firm.

10 When we call, answer us, O Yahweh,
make the king victorious!

• **20 (19)** We cannot be expected to work up an enthusiasm for some dead king's campaign. 'Send him victorious' for only one, and his crown was made of thorns. If we do not accept this fact, this psalm is not for us. The word of God must always be effective, but sometimes it has done its work already in one quarter and must turn, to face another situation. This is not always the case but it is possible here, because we are still a monarchy: and the king is Christ. When victory is final, we will say: "Thanks be given to God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:57). Those who are willing to believe that our help is in the Name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth, can pray with this psalm.

This psalm invites us not to count too much on our own feats, but much more on the power of God. May the Lord protect those who struggle to bring about the kingdom of truth, just as he protected Christ, our King.

• **21 (20)** This is another psalm that requires transposition. But now, the victory is won and we think of the ascended Christ, in his immortal and glorified body. But the war is not over yet: the spoils have to be safely guarded in. Christ has not retired to enjoy his triumph. He sits at the right hand of God, but God is everywhere. So Christ is still Emmanuel, God with us. He is much more with us because the restrictions of space and time, have been taken from his body. This indeed is what the Ascension means: not a going but a more powerful coming, not a withdrawal but an active presence. So we have no reason to fear! God is in charge and need we look for more? For all this, our psalm is a great thanksgiving song.

The Messiah is crowned with “glory and dignity” (Heb 2:9) and he has been glorified (Jn 13:31). With this psalm, we thank God for the blessings received and we enkindle our trust in him.

• **22 (21)** When a dying person has the strength to whisper ‘Our Father,’ we may suppose that his thoughts go on with the prayer his lips cannot finish. When the crucified Christ shouted the first dreadful line of this psalm, his mind must have gone on to its triumphal end, thanking his Father, that this dark way of desertion, led to the light beyond it. But Christ does not suffer alone, nor is he glorified alone. We are ‘in Christ’ for better or for worse, in suffering and in joy. The feeling of desertion and the uncertainty that comes with physical pain and continued

PSALM 21 (20)**After victory.**20:
61:6-8

²The king rejoices in your strength, O Yahweh, and exults in your saving help. 63:12

³You have granted him his desire; you have not rejected his request. 20:5

⁴You have come to him with rich blessings; you have placed a golden crown upon his head.

⁵When he asked, you gave him life—length of days forever and ever. 2K
20:1-7

⁶He glories in the victory you gave him; you shall bestow on him splendor and majesty. 45:4;
96:6

⁷You have given him eternal blessings, and gladdened him with the joy of your presence. 72:17;
Gen 12:
2-3

⁸The king trusts in Yahweh, and through the love of the Most High, he will not be shaken. 61:8;
89:2;
Pro
20:28

⁹Your hand, O Yahweh, will reach your enemies, and lay hold of all your foes.

¹⁰Your mere appearance will turn them into a blazing furnace. Your wrath will engulf them, like a fire.

¹¹You will wipe their fruit from the earth and destroy their posterity.

¹²Though they plot evil against you and devise wicked schemes, they will never win;

¹³they will turn back in fear, when you aim arrows at them.

¹⁴Be exalted, O Yahweh, in your strength! We will sing in praise of your might. 57:6-12

PSALM 22 (21)**The suffering servant wins the deliverance of the nation.**Is
52:13—
53:12

²My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from me, from the sound of my groaning? Mt
27:46;
Is 49:14;
54:7

³My God, I call by day, but you never answer; by night, and I find no rest.

⁴Yet, you are enthroned, the Holy One, the praise of Israel. Is 6:3

⁵In you, our fathers trusted, and you delivered them.

⁶They cried to you and they were saved; they trusted in you and were not overcome. Jdg
3:9-15

⁷But I am a worm and not human, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. Is 53:3

Mt 27:
29-31;
27:39
8 All who see me make a jest of me; they sneer and shake their heads.

37:5;
Wis 2:
18-20;
Mt 27:43
9 "He put his trust in Yahweh, let Yahweh rescue him! If Yahweh is his friend, let him help him!"

10 Yet, it is you who drew me from the womb and kept me safe at my mother's breasts.

11 I have been yours from birth; from my mother's womb, you have been my God.

38:22
12 Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is no one to help me.

13 A herd of bulls surround me—strong bulls of Bashan closing in on me,

17:12
14 their mouths open, like lions roaring for their prey.

15 I am like water draining away; all my bones are out of joint; my heart melts away like wax.

16 My throat is dried up, like a potsherd; my tongue clings to my palate. You have laid me down in the dust of death.

17 Round about me are vicious dogs, villainous rogues encircling me. They have tied up my hands and feet.

18 They can count all my bones, for they are looking, and watching me,

Mt 27:35;
Jn 19:24
19 dividing my garments among them, and casting lots for my raiment.

20 O Yahweh, be not far from me! O my strength, come quickly to my help.

21 Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the powerful grip of the dog.

7:3;
17:12;
57:5;
2Tim 4:17
22 Rescue me from the jaws of the lion, my soul from the horns of the wild bull.

35:18;
40:10;
Heb 2:12
23 I will proclaim your name to my brothers, I will praise you in the assembly,

24 "All you who fear Yahweh, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him! All you sons of Israel, revere him!

Heb 5:7
25 For he has not scorned or loathed the afflicted in his misery. He has not hidden his face from me, but has listened when I cried to him."

35:18
26 I will praise you in the great assembly, fulfill my vows before all who revere you.

27 The lowly will eat and be satisfied. Those who seek Yahweh will praise him. May your hearts live forever!

72:8-11
28 The whole earth will acknowledge and turn to Yahweh; the families of nations will worship him.

weakness, must be lived through in faith—faith that gives no light, but only strength to go on doing what we know we must.

If we suffer physical, emotional and mental torture, we must remember that Christ also suffered in a similar manner. And because his suffering and death brought resurrection and hope to the world, we, too, have such a hope for our salvation. Like the descendants of the psalmist who has continued in the tradition of praising and serving God, we too, can continue this tradition and fulfill Jesus' call in Mathew 28:19 to spread the Good News to all nations and all generations to come.

After our confession, and full of light, we will sing the luminous praise of the eternal "Alleluia."

²⁹For dominion belongs to Yahweh and he reigns over the nations. Ob 1:21; Zec 14:9; Rev 11:15

³⁰Before him, all those who rest in the earth will bow down, all who go down to the dust.

My soul will live for him. ³¹My descendants will serve him and proclaim Yahweh to coming generations; ³²they will announce his salvation to a people yet unborn, "These are the things that he has done." 48:14; 71:18; 78:6; 102:19; Eph 2:7

• **23 (22)** In the course of years of the Shepherd-Lord took flesh and died for his sheep—thus he lead the way through a dark valley to pastures beyond. We follow without fear. And if we should falter, he takes home in his arms (Lk 15:5-6). To such a shepherd we sing our hymn. But if, with the psalmist, we may change our picture, he is our generous host, too. The brimming cup he offers was dearly bought: 'Drink! This is my blood that shall be shed.'

We will be on our way until we reach the Promised Land. While we journey, this psalm will give us light and consolation. It is not the repose of death that we await but the resurrection that brings us to the Father. Do we need any more assurance than that to become a true Christian i.e. Christ-like?

The original manuscript uses the word 'Yahweh is my shepherd.' Since this psalm is a common, everyday prayer we use, for pastoral purposes, we use the known expression 'The Lord is my shepherd.'

PSALM 23 (22)

God, shepherd and host: a psalm of confidence.

¹The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Lk 15: 3-7; Jn 10: 1-30; Heb 13:20; 1P 2:25; Rev 7:17

²He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters,

³he restores my soul.

He guides me through the right paths for his name's sake. 25:11; 31:4; Ezk 20:9

⁴Although I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I fear no evil, for you are beside me: your rod and your staff comfort me.

⁵You spread a table before me in the presence of my foes.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup is overflowing. 78:19; 133:2; Lk 7:46

⁶Goodness and kindness will follow me all the days of my life,

I shall dwell in the house of the Lord as long as I live.

PSALM 24 (23)

The ruler of the universe enter his chosen dwelling place.

• **24 (23)** 'Heavens cannot contain you!' said Solomon, 'How much less this house that I have built! (2 Chr 6:18). And yet, the King of Glory passed through the gates of a Temple, where Israel's pilgrims 'sought his face.' This psalm shares the astonishment of Solomon: 'Will

The earth and its fullness belong to Yahweh, the world and all that dwell in it. 88:12; 1Cor 10:26

²He has founded it upon the ocean and set it firmly upon the waters. 75:4; 104:5; Job 38: 4-6

³Who will ascend the mountain of Yahweh? Who will stand in his holy place? 15

26:1 ⁴Those with clean hands and pure heart,
who desire not what is vain,
and never swear to a lie.

⁵They will receive blessings from Yahweh,
a reward from God, their savior.

⁶Such are the people who seek him,
who seek the face of Jacob's God.

118: 19-20 ⁷Lift up, O gateways, your lintels,
open up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may enter!

⁸Who is the King of glory?
Yahweh, the strong, the mighty,
Yahweh, valiant in battle.

⁹Lift up your lintels, O gateways,
open up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may enter!

¹⁰Who is the King of glory?
Yahweh of Hosts,
he is the King of glory!

PSALM 25 (24)

Prayer for protection and forgiveness: an alphabetic psalm.

86:4 ¹To you, O Yahweh, I lift up my soul.

²In you, my God I trust; let me not be put to
shame, let not my enemies exult over me.

³Those who hope in you will never be hum-
bled; those who turn away from you will suffer
disgrace!

27:11; 86:11 ⁴Teach me your ways, O Yahweh; make
known to me your paths.

Jn 14: 4-6; 16:13 ⁵Guide me in your truth and instruct me, for
you are my God, my savior; I hope in you all day
long.

⁶Remember your compassion, O Yahweh,
your unfailing love from of old.

79:8; 106:3 ⁷Remember not the sins of my youth, but in
your love remember me.

⁸Good and upright, Yahweh teaches sinners
his way.

⁹He teaches the humble of heart and guides
them in what is right.

¹⁰The ways of Yahweh are love and faithful-
ness for those who keep his Covenant and pre-
cepts.

God really live with men and women on the earth?' For us that wonder is surpassed. We have seen the Son of God pass through the gate of our nature and heard him speak 'of the temple of his body' (Jn 2:21). And this is not all! Mystically assumed into that body, our own selves become temples too—but we must throw open the gates of a generous heart: 'If anyone loves me, my Father will love him; and we will come to him' (Jn 14:23). We think of this as we sing: 'Let him enter, the King of Glory!' 'Come, Lord Jesus' (Rev 22:20).

• **25 (24)** This sad admission of guilt is for us, more encouraging. At last, we sympathize with the psalmist. God is the teacher. The Loving Guide goes in front of us and we watch him. At times, he turns round to see if we are following. This psalm is a model 'act of contrition.' It does not try to stir up an emotional sorrow. It simply states the case, admits the guilt, and asks for mercy. Can anyone before God do more?

Scripture does not know despair. We can be broken by sorrow, anxiety, the weight of sin, but there is always an escape. All our paths, even the worst, can finally lead to a love stronger than all the powers of this world.

In praying this psalm, the psalmist has asked God for many favors. Our prayers like his, have been answered several times by Jesus who in John 14:6 says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." And then again, in Mathew 11:28-30, "Come to me, all of you who...carry heavy burdens...for my yoke is good and

my burden is light." In fact, ALL answers have been provided to us by Jesus in the Gospels. If only we believe!

¹¹For the sake of your name, Yahweh, forgive my iniquity, for it is great. 23:3; 103:3

¹²To those who fear Yahweh, he will teach the way to choose.

¹³They will live in prosperity, and their descendants will inherit the land. 37:9; Is 60:21

¹⁴Yahweh gives advice to those who revere him and makes his Covenant known to them.

¹⁵My eyes are always on Yahweh, for he will free my feet from the snare. 123:1; 141:8; 31:5

¹⁶Turn to me and have compassion, for I am lonely and afflicted. 86:16; 119:132

¹⁷Free my heart of bitterness; relieve me of this distress.

¹⁸See my pain and suffering, and forgive all my sins. 119:153; 32:5; 85:3

¹⁹See how my enemies have increased and how violently they hate me.

²⁰Deliver me from them; let me not be put to shame, for I have trusted you.

²¹Let integrity and uprightness be my protection, for all my hope, O Yahweh, is in you.

²²Redeem, O God, redeem Israel from all its troubles!

PSALM 26 (25)

Prayer of a person of integrity.

• **26 (25)** How can I sing this psalm? Do I really walk 'along the straight path?' Surely the psalmist himself is exaggerating. Dare he challenge God's scrutiny? After all, the psalmist himself asks for mercy: he feels he needs it. We certainly do.

Paul has an experience, similar to the ones described in the psalm: even if you have a good conscience, that is not enough to justify you (1 Cor 4:4). This psalm is not for one who glories in his own works, but for those who subject themselves to the scrutinizing and purifying regard of God, for those who trust God.

Let us make our own the prayer of the just that reaffirms his fidelity. Let us not count on our own merits, like the Pharisee. Let us rather give thanks for this new person that we have become through baptism: Christ has purified and has enriched us.

¹Declare me innocent, O Yahweh, for I have lived with integrity; I have put my trust in Yahweh, I shall never waver. 17:1; 15:2

²Prove me, O Yahweh, put me to the test; examine my soul and my heart. 17:3

³For your love is ever before my eyes, and I live in truth and faithfulness.

⁴I do not associate with the deceitful nor do I go with hypocrites; 1:1-2

⁵I hate the party of the corrupt and avoid the company of the wicked.

⁶I wash my hands free of guilt and walk in procession round your altar, 73:13; 30:17-21; D:21:6-7; Mt:27:24

⁷singing hymns of praise and thanksgiving and proclaiming your wondrous deeds. 9:2

⁸O Yahweh, I love the house where you dwell, the place of your glory.

⁹Let me not share the fate of sinners, nor lose my life with the violent; ¹⁰their hands are guilty 28:3

of crimes, their right hands are weighed down with bribes.

¹¹But I will walk in integrity, redeem me, O God, be gracious to me.

¹²My foot stands firm in the straight path, I will praise you, O Yahweh, in your assemblies.

PSALM 27 (26)

Triumphant trust in God.

4:7;
18:29;
36:10;
43:3;
Jn 1:4-9;
1Jn 1:5;
Ps 28:8;
31:1

¹Yahweh is my light and my salvation
—whom shall I fear?

Yahweh is the rampart of my life;
I will not be afraid.

²When the wicked rush at me
to devour my flesh,
it is my foes who stumble,
my enemies fall.

³Though an army encamp against me,
my heart will not fail;
though war break out against me,
I will still be confident.

23:6;
42:3;
63:3

⁴One thing I ask of Yahweh, one thing I seek—
that I may dwell in his house all the days of my
life,
to gaze at his jewel and to visit his Sanctuary.

17:8;
31:21;
64:3;
61:3

⁵For he will keep me safe in his shelter
in times of misfortune;
he will hide me beneath his roof,
and set me high upon a rock.

⁶Then my head will be lifted up
over the enemies round about me.
I will offer sacrifices at his Tent with shouts of
joy;
I will sing and make music in praise of Yahweh.

⁷Hear my voice when I call, O Yahweh,
have mercy on me and answer.

⁸My heart says to you,
“I seek your face, O Yahweh.”

13:2;
44:25;
69:18;
88:15

⁹Do not hide your face from me
nor turn away your servant in anger.
You are my protector, do not reject me;
abandon me not, O God my savior!

• **27 (26)** One is aware of the swift changes of mood in many psalms. However, it would be rash to take this alone, to indicate the fusion of two or more. Prayer has its own rules—or none. It is not surprising that high confidence should suddenly give way to urgent appeal. Peter jumped into the lake without a thought, but he was soon shouting ‘Lord, save me.’ Moreover, the confidence returns, even in the second part of the psalm. Our fathers and mothers must leave us in the end, but our Father in heaven, never!

The anonymous voice of the last verse proposes and ratifies: courage rather than fear; hope rather than discouragement. This is true too for the Christian; before danger, there is a word of encouragement, for instance in John 16:33 and Matthew 14:26. Here is a beautiful prayer to cultivate the absolute trust of the believer in God.

In the struggles of this life, the believer is not discouraged, but clings to the hope the Lord has in store for us at the end of the conflict. A trust without limits: Though my father and mother forsake me, yet will the Lord receive me. To such a God, the psalmist can say: One thing I seek... (to) dwell in the house of the Lord. All the struggles, trials and temptations will not let us forget the house of the Lord at the end of the road.

¹⁰Though my father and mother forsake me,
yet will Yahweh receive me.

Is 49:
14-15

¹¹Teach me, O Yahweh your way;
lead me along a straight path.

86:11;
25:4, 12

¹²Save me from the plot of my enemies,
for false witnesses have risen against me
to pin me down in their violence.

¹³I hope, I am sure,
that I will see the goodness of Yahweh
in the land of the living.

¹⁴Trust in Yahweh, be strong and courageous
yes, put your hope in Yahweh!

37:34;
130:5-6;
31:25;
Jos 1:9;
1 Cor
16:13

PSALM 28 (27)

Prayer in time of danger.

• **28 (27)** The psalmist often worries that the Lord will confuse him with wicked people—as if God may overlook him. The fear has its pathos but we must not take the idea too seriously. The devout will use any trick or promises, hoping God will hear his or her pleading. God surely understands these human ways. Jesus was once pleased with the faith and quick wit of the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:26-28). We may notice too the identification of the wicked, with such hypocrites as sometimes, we ourselves are: a show of politeness is not charity, ‘one may smile and smile and yet be a villain.’

Those who complain about the silence of God and nonetheless continue to believe, can pray with this psalm. Jesus, in Mark 11:24, has told us, ‘whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it shall be done for you.’

¹To you, O Yahweh, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me.

35:22;
39:13

For if you heed me not, I shall go down to the pit like the rest.

²Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your innermost Sanctuary.

5:8;
134:2

³Drag me not away with the wicked, with those who do evil, who mouth words of peace while they sow mischief and confusion.

26:9;
12:3;
Pro 26:
24-25

⁴Punish them for their evil designs and wicked deeds; give them their due reward. ⁵Since they have no regard for the works of Yahweh, he will tear them down and never let them rise again.

21:23-25;
Ps 62:13;
94:2;
137:8

⁶Blessed be Yahweh! He has heard my cry for help.

Is 5:12;
Ps 52:7

⁷Yahweh is my strength, my shield; my heart was sure of him; I have been helped and my heart exults; with my song I give him thanks.

⁸Yahweh is the strength of his people, the saving refuge of his anointed.

29:11;
1S 2:10

⁹Save your people, and bless your inheritance, be their shepherd and carry them forever.

23:1;
Is 40:11

PSALM 29 (28)**God's power seen in the storm.**

- 96:7-8 ¹Give Yahweh, O sons of God,
give Yahweh glory and strength,
18:11-16; 77:18-19;
97:2-4; 19:16...
19;
Hb 3;
Job 37:
2-5 ²give Yahweh the glory due his name;
worship Yahweh in great liturgy.
- ³The voice of Yahweh is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
Yahweh thunders over vast waters.
- ⁴How powerful is the voice of Yahweh,
How splendidous is the voice of Yahweh.
- ⁵The voice of Yahweh tears up the cedars,
Yahweh is shattering the cedars of Lebanon.
- 114:4; Dt 3:9 ⁶He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild bull.
- ⁷The voice of Yahweh breaks forth with flashes
of fire,
⁸the voice of Yahweh makes the wilderness quake,
Yahweh is shaking the wilderness of Kadesh.
- ⁹The voice of Yahweh makes the oaks shudder,
Yahweh strips the forests bare,
and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"
- Gen 6:9 ¹⁰Over the flood Yahweh was sitting;
Yahweh is King and he reigns forever.
- 28:8; 68:36 ¹¹May Yahweh give his people strength;
may Yahweh bless his people with peace!

• **29 (28)** The psalmist praises the power of God displayed in the storm. The strength is of a powerful hand that calms and moves—a strength man can trust. The psalmist sees his land, shaken from end to end, from the bulk of Lebanon range in the north, to the southern wilds of Kadesh. He is not disturbed: the Lord sits as king above the storm and blesses his people with peace. 'The Lord's voice' speaks in nature, in Israel's law and through the prophets. Last and most clear, it spoke through the Son. This same voice, this Word itself took flesh. At the birth, the angels echoed our psalm, which begins with 'glory in the highest!' and ends with 'peace to people.' Jesus is at once the power and the peace of God. We sing this sacred song to the incarnate Word.

A true believer is awed before the mystery of God and allows himself to be seduced by Him. He is assured of the greater power of the hand of God who can instantly save. In Christ Jesus, we have all the answers we need, therefore, no matter what calamities come our way, there should be absolutely no need for panic.

PSALM 30 (29)**Thanksgiving for recovery from sickness.**

- ²I extol you, O Yahweh, for you have rescued me; my enemies will not gloat over me.
- 6:3 ³Yahweh, my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.
- ⁴Yahweh, you have brought me up from the grave,
you gave me life when I was going to the pit.
- 97:12 ⁵Sing to Yahweh, O you his saints, give thanks
and praise to his holy name.
- Is 54:7-8 ⁶For his anger lasts but a little while, and his
kindness all through life.
- Weeping may tarry for the night, but rejoicing comes with the dawn.
- ⁷Once in my prosperity I said, "I shall not be troubled."

• **30 (29)** 'The devil was sick, the devil, a monk would be. The devil was well, the devil, a monk was he.' This is said of those persons who, in times of sickness or danger make pious resolutions, but forget them, when danger is past and health recovered. There is some truth in this. Good health has its own unconscious arrogance and is even accompanied sometimes, by a deceptive feeling of holiness. Sickness opens our eyes. We look back on our lives and are frightened by the selfishness of our motives. When we recover, our conduct may not improve, but at least we may be grateful for our recovery in our

prayers. But the real sickness is of mind and soul, and if we ask God to cure us of this, the dawn will break.

Nothing is definitive in this life. The Lord alternates joys and sorrows according to what we need, for the development of our faith. We are, at times, surprised: the trials discourage us as if God no longer existed, and when God grants favors, we find it hard to believe them to be true.

Those who know they are besieged by sickness and are threatened by death can pray with this psalm.

• **31 (30)** False accusation and violence teach the psalmist that truth and peace can be surely found only in God. It is the situation of Jeremiah (Jer 20:7 ff), of the author of the very similar Psalm 22, and of Jesus himself, who quotes that psalm and this on the Cross. There is a hint of momentary fear and a cry of desperation, a 'Let this cup of suffering pass me by,' but also a swift recovery. It is not perhaps the perfect designation of 'Your will be done,' but is at least, a confident cry for help. This is usually as much as we can manage ourselves, and no doubt in God's eyes, it is enough. Our lives are in his hands, the psalmist says twice: the hands of God are sure and gentle.

This psalm has so many nuances and so many different perspectives that, whoever prays with it, can remain wherever he feels more comfortable. At the end of the psalm, love prevails.

The psalmist appears to be in a state of desperation. At times, we too can identify ourselves with such a situation. However, he does not give up hope when he asks the Lord to, "Save me in your love" in the very last words. There also are prophetic words in this psalm as Jesus Himself

⁸Yet it was you, O Yahweh, who made me stand on the rock; as soon as you hid your face, I wavered! 27:9; 104:29

⁹To you, O Yahweh, I called; to you I begged for mercy:

¹⁰"What good would there be in my destruction, in my going down to the pit? 6:6

Would my dust give you praise?

Would it prove your faithfulness?

¹¹Hear, O Yahweh, and have mercy on me; O Yahweh, be my protector."

¹²But now, you have turned my mourning into rejoicing; you have taken off my sackcloth and wrapped me in the garments of gladness. 126:5-6; Is 35:10; Jer 31:13

¹³And so my soul, no longer silent, now sings praise without ceasing. O Yahweh my God, forever will I give you thanks.

PSALM 31 (30)

Confident prayer in distress.

²In you, O Yahweh, I take refuge, may I never be disgraced; deliver me in your justice. 71:1-3

³Give heed to my plea, and make haste to rescue me. Be a rock of refuge for me, a fortress for my safety.

⁴For you are my rock and my stronghold, lead me for your name's sake; 18:3; 23:3

⁵free me from the snare that they have set for me. Indeed you are my protector. 25:15; 142:8

⁶Into your hands I commend my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Yahweh, faithful God. Lk 23:46; Acts 7:59; 1P 4:19

⁷You hate those who worship worthless idols; but I put all my trust in Yahweh.

⁸I will rejoice and be glad in your love, for you have seen my affliction; you know the agony of my soul. ⁹The hand of the enemy did not grab me; you gave me room to move. 18:20; 118:5

¹⁰Be merciful to me, O Yahweh in my affliction; my eyes have grown dim with sorrow, my body emaciated. 6:8

¹¹For my days are wracked with grief, and my years worn out in anguish. My strength fails because of my misery.

¹²I have become an object of reproach for my foes, a horror for my neighbors, a fear to my friends. Those who see me in the streets flee from me.

¹³I am like the dead, unremembered; I have become like a broken pot, thrown away, discarded.

Jer 6:25;
Mt
26:3-4

¹⁴I hear whispering among the crowd, rumors that frighten me from every side—their conspiracies, their schemes, their plot to take my life.

22:11;
63:2

¹⁵But I put my trust in you, O Yahweh, I said: “You are my God;”

¹⁶my days are in your hand. Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, from those after my skin.

4:7;
67:2;
118:135;
80:4,20;
Num 6:25

¹⁷Make your face shine upon your servant; save me in your love.

¹⁸Let me not be dishonored, O Yahweh, for I have called on you;

but let the wicked lie dishonored, and go to the pit, never to speak.

¹⁹Let lying lips close in silence; these, speaking against the just with malice and arrogance.

²⁰How great is the goodness which you have stored for those who fear you, which you show, for all to see, to those who take refuge in you!

27:5

²¹In the shelter of your presence, you hide them from human wiles; you keep them in your dwelling, safe from the intrigues of wagging tongues.

²²Blessed be Yahweh for his wonderful love! He has strengthened my heart.

Jon 2:5

²³I said in my fright: “I have been cut off from your sight!”

Yet, when I was crying, you heard; when I called for mercy, you listened.

²⁴Love Yahweh, all you his saints! Yahweh preserves his faithful; but he fully requites the arrogant.

27:14

²⁵Be strong and take courage, all you who hope in Yahweh.

PSALM 32 (31)

The joy of being forgiven: second psalm of repentance.

25:18;
Rom
4:7-8

¹Blessed is the one whose sin is forgiven, whose iniquity is wiped away.

Jn 1:47

²Blessed are those in whom Yahweh sees no guilt and in whose spirit is found no deceit.

39:2-4

³When I kept my sin secret, my body wasted away;

in Luke 23:46 utters the words, “Into your hands I commend my spirit.” Jesus once again shows us the way, even at the last hour. Our hope and trust in the Lord can be restored by repeatedly praying with this psalm.

• **32 (31)** Perhaps it is unfair to call this a “penitential psalm” as the mood is more of joy than penance. There may be a lesson here that the virtuous life is not a gloomy one. Suppression and self-deception, as the psalm admits, never made for happiness. Free acknowledgment of

God and of ourselves is a duty, but it is also a health medicine. This conclusion drawn by the psalmist, is followed by the voice of God confirming it. God is anxious to lead us along this way. We have only to be docile; he will do the rest.

In Christian language, sin signifies that we committed a wrong, not necessarily with a law, but toward someone we love. Our well being, in the truest meaning of the word, depends on the quality of our relationship with God. What sin has destroyed will only be restored by trust in God, who pardons the humble and the repentant.

The psalmist reminds us of the power of confession. It converts a guilty sinner into a pure and wholesome child of God. Jesus died for the forgiveness of our sins and by his blood we are saved. At the Eucharist, we acknowledge and confess our sins and in the sacrament, we confess individually and privately to convert ourselves into better human beings, to enable us to enter God's kingdom.

This psalm is for those who can say truly: "I confess to God..."

I was moaning all day long.

⁴Your hand, day and night, lay heavy upon me; draining my strength, parching my heart, as in the heat of a summer drought.

⁵Then I made known to you my sin and uncovered before you my fault, saying to myself,

"To Yahweh I will now confess my wrong."
And you, you forgave my sin;
you removed my guilt.

⁶So let the faithful ones pray to you in time of distress;
the overflowing waters will not reach them.

⁷You are my refuge;
you protect me from distress
and surround me with songs of deliverance.

⁸I will teach you,
I will show you the way to follow.
I will watch over you and give you counsel.

⁹Do not be like the horse or the mule—
senseless and led by bit and bridle.

¹⁰Many woes befall the wicked,
but Yahweh's mercy enfolds those who trust in him.

¹¹Rejoice in Yahweh, and be glad,
you who are upright;
sing and shout for joy,
you who are clean of heart.

51:5;
2S12:13;
1Jn
1:9-10

33:18

33:1

PSALM 33 (32)

Joyful song to the Creator: national hymn of thanksgiving.

• **33 (32)** Perhaps from fear of emotionalism, clamorous joy seems to be suspect in religion. And yet God gave us the power to shout no less than to whisper. One feels that the Hebrew at least appreciated this. After all, the cosmos is his, and the nations on this planet, and the chosen people, and most of those who revere him. Because his strength is infinite, the width of its range does not hinder the depth of its penetration. Indeed, the individual person feels all the more secure when knowing

¹Rejoice in Yahweh, you who are just;
praise is fitting for the upright.

²Give thanks to him on the harp and lyre,
making melody and chanting praises.

³Amid loud shouts of joy,
sing to him a new song
and play the ten-stringed harp.

⁴For upright is Yahweh's word
and worthy of trust is his work.

⁵Yahweh loves justice and righteousness;
the earth is full of his kindness.

32:11

96:1;
98:1;
144:9;
149:1;
Is 42:10;
Rev 5:9;
14:3

89:15;
119:64

Gen 1:1-8; 2:1, 4; Heb 11:3
 6 The heavens were created by his word,
 the breath of his mouth formed their starry host.
 Job 38: 8-11, 37
 7 He gathered the waters of the sea into a heap,
 and stored the deep in cellars.

67:8; 102:16
 8 Let the whole earth fear Yahweh;
 let the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of
 him.

148:5; Is 48:13
 9 For he spoke and so it was,
 he commanded, and everything stood firm.

2:2
 10 Yahweh frustrates the plans of the nations
 and brings to nothing the peoples' designs.

Pro 19:21
 11 But his plan stands forever,
 and his heart's design, through all generations.

144:15; Dt 7:6
 12 Blessed is the nation whose God is Yahweh—
 the people he has chosen for his inheritance.

14:2
 13 Yahweh looks down from heaven
 and sees the whole race of mortals.

94:9-11; 139: 1-16; Gen 2:7-8
 14 From where he sits, he watches
 all those who dwell on the earth—
 15 he who fashions every heart,
 observes all their deeds.

20:8; Am 2: 14-16
 16 A king is not saved by a powerful army,
 nor a warrior rescued by his great strength.

32:8; 34:16
 17 Don't think that a horse will save you;
 its great strength does not assure victory.

18 But Yahweh's eyes are upon those who fear
 him,

upon those who trust in his loving-kindness;
 19 to deliver them from death
 and preserve them from famine.

115: 9-10
 20 In hope, we wait for Yahweh,
 for he is our help and our shield.

21 Our hearts rejoice in him,
 for we trust in his holy name.

22 O Yahweh, let your love rest upon us,
 even as our hope rests in you.

13:21; 11-16
PSALM 34 (33)

Praise and fear of God: an alphabetical psalm.

16:7; 145:1
 2 I will praise Yahweh all my days;
 his praise will be ever on my lips.

3 My soul makes its boast in Yahweh;
 let the lowly hear and rejoice.

that all creation can be arranged effortlessly for its own ultimate happiness. It would be unnatural if such a faith did not produce a joy that expresses itself humbly and yet triumphantly.

The language of this psalm may seem simplistic to many: is the world really so docile to God's wishes? It is a problem of faith. Faith does not enable us to see through rose-colored spectacles what is not rosy; but the vision of a forest is not the same for the one who goes through the bushes and for the one who looks at it from a helicopter. Perhaps verses 6 and 9 of this psalm are present in prologue to John's Gospel. The faithful vision of the cosmos and of history is necessarily optimistic; it generates joy and trust.

The psalm speaks of foreign nations who threaten the people of God. It is a great privilege to belong to his people!

• **34 (33)** 'Look toward him and be radiant' was John Fisher's inspiration, at the hour of his martyrdom. When he saw that the sun shone behind the scaffold,

Fisher looked toward Him who would make him radiant in the beatific vision. This is a song for martyrs: the Lord sets them free from all their terrors. It is also a song for the small martyrdoms of every day, whether volunteered or simply accepted. One may be discouraged by one's failure in past trials, weakness in those of the present, and uncertainty of one's resistance in the future. Our own weapons are always rusting and loose in our hands. The bright and effective sword is in the hand of God alone. There will be no ultimate defeat, not a bone broken for those who are one with the Lamb of our Pass-over on the Cross.

Let our experience be that of the poor and the humble. God is near to those who have no other support but him. When there will be no assurance, God will be obliged, to take charge of those to whom he owes fidelity.

- ⁴ Oh, let us magnify Yahweh;
together, let us glorify his name!
- ⁵ I sought Yahweh, and he answered me;
from all my fears he delivered me.
- ⁶ They who look to him are radiant with joy,
their faces never clouded with shame.
- ⁷ When the poor cry out, Yahweh hears
and saves them from distress.
- ⁸ Yahweh's angel encamps and patrols,
to keep safe those who fear him.
- ⁹ Oh, see and taste the goodness of Yahweh!
Blessed is the one who finds shelter in him!
- ¹⁰ Revere Yahweh, all you, his saints,
for those who fear him do not live in want.
- ¹¹ The mighty may be hungry and in need;
but those who seek Yahweh lack nothing.
- ¹² Come, listen to me, my children;
I will show you how to fear Yahweh.
- ¹³ If you desire long life;
if you want to enjoy prosperity,
- ¹⁴ keep your tongue from falsehood,
keep your lips from deceit;
- ¹⁵ turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.
- ¹⁶ The eyes of Yahweh are fixed on the righteous;
his ears are inclined to their cries.
- ¹⁷ But his face is set against the wicked,
to destroy their memory from the earth.
- ¹⁸ Yahweh hears the cry of the righteous
and rescues them from all their troubles.
- ¹⁹ Yahweh is close to the brokenhearted
and saves the distraught.
- ²⁰ Many are the troubles of the just,
but Yahweh delivers them from all.
- ²¹ He keeps all their bones intact,
and none of them will be broken.
- ²² Evil will slay the wicked;
the enemies of the just will be doomed.
- ²³ But Yahweh will redeem the life of his servants;
none of those who trust in him will be doomed.

35:5-6;
91:11;
14:19;
23:20

1P 2:3;
Ps 2:12

23:1

Pro 1:8

1P 3:
10-12

37:27

33:18

51:19

Jn 19:36

25:22

PSALM 35 (34)**Appeal for vindication.**

¹ O Yahweh, attack those who attack me;
fight against those who fight against me.

² Come to my aid, with armor and shield;

³ stand with your spear and lance, halt my
pursuers. Say to my soul, "I am your deliverer."

71:13;
40:15

⁴ Let them be shamed and dishonored, those
who seek my life. Let them be routed and de-
stroyed, those who plot my ruin.

1:4;
83:14;
34:8

⁵ Let them be like chaff before the wind, when
Yahweh's angel drives them away.

73:18

⁶ Let their escape path be dark and precipi-
tous, with Yahweh's angel always at their heels.

9:16

⁷ They set their net against me for no cause;
they dug a pit for me without reason.

Is 47:11;
Ps 7:16;
140:6

⁸ Let ruin come upon them unexpectedly; let
them be entangled in their own snare; let them
fall into the trap of their own making.

⁹ Then will my soul rejoice in Yahweh, and
exult in his salvation.

71:19;
77:14

¹⁰ My whole being will exclaim, "O Yahweh,
who is like you? You deliver the oppressed from
those too strong for them; you rescue the poor
and the needy from their oppressors."

27:11;
Mt 26:
59-60

¹¹ False witnesses take the stand, accusing me
of crimes of which I am innocent.

38:21;
109:5

¹² For my kindness, they return evil, bringing
my life to despair.

¹³ When they were sick, I wore sackcloth and
fasted; I prayed hard, with head bowed,

38:7

¹⁴ as if I were bereft of a friend or brother; I
shed tears in grief, as one mourning the death of
his mother.

¹⁵ But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee
and began to strike me; like strangers, they dis-
owned me and accused me falsely.

¹⁶ Like an ungodly circle of mockers, they
gnashed their teeth and made me the butt of all
their ridicule.

¹⁷ How long, O Yahweh, will you look on?
Deliver my life, my only one, from these lions.

22:26

¹⁸ Then I will thank you in the great assembly; I
will praise you in the mighty throng.

69:5;
Jn 15:25

¹⁹ Do not let them gloat over me—those who,
unprovoked, have become my foes. Do not let

• **35 (34)** The psalmists are not frightened to mix their metaphors freely, and as a result, our many-sided God appears in his solid dimension. He is first, a soldier, then, a farmer on his threshing-floor (because God's 'angel' is God himself), then, a poacher using the net others have left. Last of all and less graphically, a counsel for the defense ready to cross-examine and to tear false witnesses to pieces. He cites many situations the falsely accused average person faces. The witness against us is Satan ('the adversary') as he was against Job (Job 1:6-11). The defense is the Spirit (Rom 8:26-27). Can we fear the verdict? The arguments of the prosecuting counsel are strong, but they reckon without the mercy of the judge.

The psalmist echoes the feelings of the innocent. He has cited most situations the average person who is falsely accused of, faces. However, his faith in the Lord is strong and he knows that our good God will ultimately deliver him from the hands of his enemies. Jesus too suffered such a faith but in His resurrection, He won victory for all of us promising us eternal life.

Here is a psalm for those who seek God, in pain or suffered injustice. Perhaps those who pray with this psalm in these circumstances, may realize that God is not far away.

them wink maliciously—those who hate me without cause.

²⁰Sowing discontent with their tongue and mind, they devise false accusations against the peace-loving people of the land.

²¹They open wide their mouths against me: “Aha, aha!” they say, “We have seen it with our own eyes!”

²²But you, O Yahweh, who have seen, do not keep silent. Do not stand far from me. 38:22;
22:12

²³Stir yourself up; stand up for my rights and my cause, my God and my Yahweh! 7:7;
44:24

²⁴Declare me innocent, O Yahweh, my God, according to your justice.

Let them not gloat over me.

²⁵Never give them reason to say, “We have trampled him down!” 40:14-
17;
70:3-4

²⁶Let them be utterly disgraced and confounded, who exult over my calamity. Let them be ashamed and dishonored, who rejoice at my distress.

²⁷But let them be glad and rejoice, who are in sympathy with my cause. And may they ever say, “Great is Yahweh, who has justified his servant.”

²⁸Then will my tongue proclaim your righteousness, and sing your praises all day long. 71:24

PSALM 36 (35)

Man’s malice: God’s goodness.

• **36 (35)** We surely have two psalms here, despite the attempt of the last two verses to bind them together. Nevertheless, the contrast of the two halves is instructive. In the first there is a personified oracular authority—and it is Sin: a master of willing slaves, who do not dare to use their own judgment, or to reflect on their own unhappiness. In the second, there is still another principle more active, tested by the happiness it gives: it is as deep as the sea and as high as the Olympus—God’s love for man and beast. The first authority is the end of all wisdom; the second is the beginning of it. In its light, we can see the jigsaw pattern of created things and insert our own piece, where it

²Wickedness speaks to the wicked in the depths of his heart: there is no fear of God before his eyes. ³Blinded by conceit, he fails to see his guilt. Rom
3:18

⁴With mouths full of malice and deceit, they no longer think of doing good.

⁵They plot mischief even in bed; committed to a life of sin, they know not how to reject evil.

⁶Your love, O God, reaches the heavens; your faithfulness, to the clouds. 57:11;
Eph 3:
18-19

⁷Your justice is like the mighty mountains; your judgment, like the unfathomable deep. You preserve, O Yahweh, humans and beasts.

⁸How precious, O God, is your constant love! Mortals take refuge in the shadow of your wings. 17:8;
91:4

⁹In your house they find rich food and they drink from your spring of delight. 23:5;
63:6

56:14; 89:16 ¹⁰For with you is the fountain of life, in your light we see light.

¹¹Bestow on your faithful, your love; and give salvation to the upright of heart.

¹²Let not the foot of the arrogant trample on me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.

¹³But what! See how the evildoers lie fallen, flung down and never to rise again.

PSALM 37 (36)

Reflections on good and evil.

73; Job 21; 1:26; Pro 24:19 ¹Do not be annoyed with evil people nor be envious of wrongdoers.

90:6; 103:15; Is 40:7 ²For they will fade as any green herb and soon be gone, like withered grass.

³Trust in Yahweh and do good; dwell in the land and live on it.

⁴Make Yahweh your delight; and he will grant your heart's desire.

⁵Commit your way to Yahweh; put your trust in him and let him act.

⁶Then will your revenge come, beautiful as the dawn, and the justification of your cause, bright as the noonday sun.

4:5; 62:6 ⁷Keep calm before Yahweh, wait for him in patience; do not fret if others succeed when they carry out evil schemes.

⁸Refrain from anger, turn away from wrath; fret not, for it only leads to evil.

25:13 ⁹Remember this: the wicked will perish; but those who hope in Yahweh will inherit the land.

¹⁰Wait a moment: the wicked are no more. Though you look for them, they cannot be found;

Is 57:13; Mt 5:4 ¹¹but the humble will inherit the land and enjoy peace in abundance.

35:16; 112:10 ¹²The wicked plot against the virtuous and gnash their teeth at them; ¹³but Yahweh laughs at the wicked, for he sees their day coming.

7:13; 11:2 ¹⁴The wicked draw their swords and bend their bows; they aim at the poor and the afflicted; they get ready to slay the righteous.

¹⁵But their bows will be shattered, the sword thrust into their own heart.

Pro 15:16; 16:8 ¹⁶The little that the righteous possess is better than the abundance of the wicked.

belongs. And when the pattern is invisible, the love of God must guide our hand.

Those who need help to face the mystery of sin will do well in praying this psalm. Love will conquer hatred.

• **37 (36)** Each section begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This psalm offers a very simple solution to the problem of evil which will satisfy few today. It did not satisfy, for example, the inspired author of the Book of Job. Nevertheless, the act of faith that prompts is not only touching but also fully justified. If this were not true, we could not recite the psalm with conviction. But once we have enlarged the perspective, beyond this present life—which the psalmist has not done—we can take the psalm to ourselves. The 'little longer' that a good man has to wait for his reward, may be all the rest of his life. This is a short time, when he thinks of the life to come. Besides, there is also the vertical perception: underneath the denunciation of 'the wicked man,' he should see the condemnation of wickedness itself, in our own selves especially.

This psalm has entered into the Gospel through the big portal of the Beatitudes (Mt 5:4). It is adequate for all those who live outside and far away from the goods of this land. At the same time, it becomes a clamor and a denunciation against those who rob others of their land.

Neither power nor riches give access to the inheritance that God promised to his children. The psalmist offers a very strong warning against all evildoers. At the same time, encourages the righteous with the promise of help from the Lord. And our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in the Beatitudes in Chapter 5 of the

Gospel of Mathew, has taught us the way to true life and eternal happiness.

¹⁷For the arms of the wicked will be broken; and the righteous will be upheld by Yahweh.

¹⁸Yahweh watches over the lives of the upright; ^{1:6} forever will their inheritance abide.

¹⁹They are not crushed in times of calamity; when famine strikes, they still are satisfied.

²⁰But the wicked will perish; the enemies of Yahweh will vanish, like smoke; disappear, like the wild flowers.

²¹The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous have mercy and share.

²²They will inherit the land—those whom Yahweh blesses; but those whom Yahweh curses he will cut off. Mt 25: 34, 41

²³Yahweh is the one who makes people stand, he gives firmness to those he likes. ^{Pro 20:24} ^{3:6} ²⁴They may stumble, but they will not fall, for Yahweh holds them by the hand.

²⁵From my youth to old age, I have yet to see the righteous forsaken or their children begging for alms.

²⁶He lends and gives, and his children are blessed. The whole day he succeeds.

²⁷Do good and shun evil, so that you will live 34:15 secure forever.

²⁸For Yahweh loves justice and right, and never forsakes his faithful ones. The wicked, instead, will perish, and their breed will be cut off.

²⁹The righteous will possess the land; they will make it their home forever.

³⁰The mouth of the virtuous utters wisdom and his tongue speaks of what is right.

³¹His steps have never faltered, for the law of God is in his heart. Dt 6:6; Jer 31:33

³²The wicked spies on the just man and lies in wait to slay him.

³³But Yahweh does not hand him over, or let him be condemned when he is tried.

³⁴Hope in Yahweh and follow his way, for he will exalt you and give you the land. You will see how the wicked perish.

³⁵I have seen an oppressor, mighty, towering Ezk 31: 10-12 like a cedar of Lebanon.

³⁶But when I passed by again, he was no longer there. I looked for him but could not find him.

³⁷Mark the blameless, watch the upright; and you will see that there is a future for the person of peace.

³⁸But all sinners will be destroyed; the future of the wicked will be shattered.

³⁹Yahweh is the salvation of the righteous; in time of distress, he is their refuge.

⁴⁰Yahweh helps them, and rescues them from the oppressor; he saves them, for they sought shelter in him.

PSALM 38 (37)

Acknowledgment of guilt: third psalm of repentance.

²O Yahweh, rebuke me not in your rage, punish me not in your fury.

³Your arrows have struck me; your hand has come down heavily upon me.

⁴Your anger has spared no part of my body; my sin gives no peace to my bones.

⁵For my transgressions overwhelm me; they weigh me down, like an unbearable load.

⁶My wounds stink and fester within me, the outcome of my sinful folly.

⁷Stooped and bowed down, I go about mourning all day.

⁸My loins burn; my flesh is diseased; ⁹my body, worn out and utterly crushed; I groan in pain and anguish of heart.

¹⁰All my longing, O Yahweh, is known to you; my sighing is not hidden from you.

¹¹My heart pounds as my strength ebbs; even the light has deserted my eyes.

¹²My friends avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far off.

¹³Those who seek my life lay snares for me; those who wish to hurt me speak of my ruin, and plot against me all day long.

¹⁴But like a deaf-mute, I neither hear nor open my mouth.

¹⁵I am like one whose ears hear not and whose mouth has no answer.

¹⁶For I put my trust in you, O Yahweh; you will answer for me, Yahweh God.

¹⁷I pray, "Don't let them gloat over me, nor take advantage of my helplessness when my foot slips."

¹⁸For I am about to fall, my pain is ever with me. ¹⁹I confess my transgression; I repent of my sin.

• **38 (37)** This psalm needs no transference of thought. One sometimes wonders if commentators are not too quick to take terms, like those used here, in their strictly literal sense. Is it really some specific sickness that troubles the psalmist? Or is it perhaps the graver sickness of the heart? In any case, it is the sense of sin that oppresses; the care can come only from the Lord. The tone of distress is strongly comforting. We so often imagine that the sacred writers of Israel were innocent and saintly, but behind these words, there seems to be a consciousness of serious and repeated sin. If so, the lesson for us is sharper: the greater the sin, the greater must be the confidence, not of course, in ourselves but in God.

This psalm has become the prayer of all sinners, as we read in 1 John 1:8-9. Not a few sick people and sinners have found God in their sin or in the pains of their illness. When illness or misfortune comes, we begin to reflect. Then we discover that the greatest misfortune is to be a sinner.

• **39 (38)** This melancholy psalm emphasizes the shortness of life and the impermanence of all it offers. There is no hint of the life to come: revelation had a long way to go. All the psalmist could ask for, would be a resigned acceptance of his human condition. And yet, even this is a stepping-stone: his hope is in the eternal Lord, who could not desert him. He is not far from realizing that death, without further hope, would be a desertion he cannot believe in. Although in giving us his Son, God has given us everything, we possess nothing and continue to wait for everything from his mercy. Show me how frail and fleeting is my life (v. 5).

The psalmist reminds us of how frail and temporary our lives on earth are. Whilst praying this psalm, we are reminded also of Jesus' words in Mathew 6:19: "Do not store up treasure for yourself here on earth where moth and rust destroy it, and where thieves can steal it." And then further, in John 14:2, "In my Father's house are many rooms. Otherwise I would not have told you that I go prepare a place for you. After I have gone and prepared a place for you, I shall come again and take you to me, so where I am, you also may be." When we have as solid an assurance as this from our Lord and Savior Himself, why should we fear anything here on earth?

²⁰Many are my foes; many are those who hate me for no reason; ²¹those, who pay me evil for good, and harass me because I seek good.

²²Forsake me not, O Yahweh, stay not far from me, O my God.

²³Come quickly to help me, O Lord, my savior!

35:19;
69:5

35:12

22:2;
71:1822:12;
35:22;
22:20;
40:14

PSALM 39 (38)

No abiding city.

²I said, "I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will muzzle my mouth in front of the wicked."

³So I did. But as I kept silent, their happiness made my anguish grow.

⁴My heart began to burn within, and finally, I blurted out:

⁵"Yahweh, let me know when my end will come; let me know the number of my days; show me how frail and fleeting is my life."

⁶You allow me to live but a short span; before you, all my years are nothing. Human existence is a mere whiff of breath.

⁷Humans are mere shadows, that go about relentlessly. Being but a breath, they toil and rake in wealth, not knowing who will take it next.

⁸But now, O Yahweh, what do I await? All my hope rests in you. ⁹Rescue me from all my sins and let me not be derided by fools.

¹⁰I shall keep silent and not open my mouth, since this is your work.

¹¹Only remove from me your scourge; for I am done in with your blows.

¹²When you want to correct the mortals and punish their sin, you eat like moth what they hold dear. Mortals are a mere puff of wind!

¹³Hear, O Yahweh, my supplication; listen to my cry for protection; do not be deaf to my lamentation. For I dwell with you, as an alien, a pilgrim, as all my ancestors have been.

¹⁴Turn from me awhile, that I may find relief, before I depart and be no more."

89:48

62:10;
90:9-10;
Job 7:
6-21;
14:1-5Job
13:28119:19;
Gen23:4;
Lev
25:23;
29:15;
Heb
11:13;
1P 2:11Job 7:
19, 21;
10:20-
22;
14:6

PSALM 40 (39)**Thanksgiving and further plea for help.**

²With resolve I waited for Yahweh; he listened and heard me beg.

18:5; 69:3 ³Out of the horrid pit he drew me; out of deadly quicksand, he settled my feet upon a rock and made my steps steady.

33:3; 52:8 ⁴He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and be awed and put their trust in Yahweh.

1:1; Jer 17:7 ⁵Blessed is the one who relies on Yahweh and does not look to the proud, nor go astray after false gods.

35:10; 71:15; 139; 17:18; Jn 21:25 ⁶How numerous, O Yahweh, are your wonderful deeds! In your marvelous plans for us you are beyond compare! How many they are—I cannot tell them or count their number.

Heb 10: 5-7; Is 50:5; Ps 51: 18-19; 69: 31-32; Am 5:22; Hos 6:6 ⁷Sacrifice and oblation you did not desire; this, you had me understand. Burnt offering and sin offering you do not require.

⁸Then I said, "Here I come! as the scroll says of me. ⁹To do your will is my delight, O God, for your law is within my heart."

22:23; 35:18 ¹⁰In the great assembly I have proclaimed your saving help. My lips, O Yahweh, I did not seal—you know that very well.

78:4 ¹¹I have not locked up in my heart your saving help, but have spoken about it—your deliverance and your faithfulness;

I have made no secret of your truth and of your kindness in the great assembly.

25:21 ¹²Do not withhold from me, O Yahweh, your mercy; let your love and faithfulness preserve me constantly.

38:5, 11 ¹³For troubles beyond number have closed in on me; I am all covered by sins and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head; and I am losing courage.

70:2-6; 22:20 ¹⁴May it please you, O Yahweh, to rescue me. Make haste, O Yahweh, to help me!

35:4, 26; 71:13 ¹⁵May those who seek my life be brought to shame and disgrace; may those who want me destroyed be turned back in confusion.

35:21, 25 ¹⁶May those who taunt me with, "Aha, aha!" be filled with shame and consternation.

¹⁷But may all those who seek you, rejoice, and be glad in you; and may all who love

• **40 (39)** The Epistle to the Hebrews (10:5-7) invites us to hear verses 7-9 of this psalm as if Christ himself were speaking them. And it is true that we could recite verses 1-11 along with him and in his name, thanking God for all that he has done. There is a quick change from thanksgiving to insisting appeal in the second half (vv. 12-18) and this part, identical with Psalm 70, was apparently a separate psalm at first. It is not improbable that the Epistle to the Hebrews has those in mind who had served as priests in the now ruined Temple: in place of their sacrifices which God no longer asked for stands the free and perfect offering that is Christ himself who like Isaiah before him said 'Here am I! Send me' (Is 6:8).

In the opening verses itself, the psalmist tells us that the Lord has rescued him. In the last verse, he admits to being poor and afflicted. The psalmist gives us assurance that no matter who we are and what our economic condition, if we love God, He will always and forever be by our side. The words of Isaiah are echoed in this psalm and Jesus in Luke 4: 21 said, "Today these prophetic words come true, even as you listen." And, the words of Jesus Christ our Savior will come true, if only we listen and obey!

Those who have experienced divine love and tenderness will feel impelled to announce it, as a great message, even at the cost of their own lives.

your saving grace continually say, “Yahweh is great.”

¹⁸Though I am afflicted and poor, yet the Lord thinks of me. You are my help and my savior—O God, do not delay!

PSALM 41 (40)

Prayer in sickness and betrayal.

• **41 (40)** It is common to find the psalmist publicly thanking God for recovery from illness. The psalm seems to begin with this but verse 4 takes us back, to the distress which is now over. In this description, we find familiar words from John’s Gospel (13:18). To reconcile the Jews to the idea of a suffering Messiah, the evangelists try to show from the Old Testament how suffering was, after all, to be expected. If the admired prophets of Israel could be persecuted and betrayed, why not the Messiah himself? Our Lord had called Judas his friend (Mt 26:50). Judas had ‘eaten his bread’ with him (Mt 26:23) but turned against him. The enemies of Jesus, like those of this psalm, thought that the name of Jesus could be forgotten (Acts 4:18). They were wrong.

The beatitude of the merciful (Mt 5:7) repeats almost literally the beatitude of the psalm. We can pray with this psalm to stimulate our care for others, to walk toward the one who is our hope, and to be relieved of our sorrows.

The sick, ridiculed and betrayed one says this prayer. Perhaps, we know him and he is beside us, waiting for our support.

²Blessed the one who has regard for the poor; Yahweh delivers him in time of trouble.

³Yahweh protects him, preserves his life, and gives him happiness in the land; he yields him not to the will of his foes.

⁴Yahweh helps him when he gets sick, and heals him of all his ailments.

⁵I have pleaded: “O Yahweh, have mercy on me;

heal me, in spite of all my iniquity.”

⁶My enemies ask of me in malice, “When will he die and his name perish?”

When they come in to see, they talk emptily, gathering slanderous gossip.

No sooner have they left, that they comment.

⁷Then all my enemies whisper together, imagining the worst for me:

⁸“A deadly disease has fastened on him. He will never get up again!”

⁹Even my most trusted friend, with whom I shared my food, has lifted his heel against me.

¹⁰But you, O Yahweh, have mercy on me; lift me up to give them recompense.

¹¹This will assure me, that I enjoy your favor: if my enemies do not triumph over me,

¹²if you uphold my integrity and let me stand in your presence forever.

¹³*Praise Yahweh, the God of Israel, from all eternity and forever! Amen. Amen!*

27:12

6:3;
30:331:12-14;
38:17-2038:12;
55:14;
Mk 14:18;
Jn 13:1872:18;
89:53;
Ne 9:5;
Dt 2:20;
Lk 1:68

PSALM 42 (41)**The exile's nostalgia for God's temple.**

Jl 1:20 ²As a deer longs for flowing streams,
36:10; so my soul longs for you, O God.
63:2-3; ³My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
84:3, 8; When shall I go and see the face of God?
Jn 4: ⁴Day and night, my tears have been my food,
10-14; as people ask me, day after day,
7:37; "Where is your God?"
Ps 17:15
79:10; ⁵Now, as I pour out my soul,
115:2; I remember all this—
Mal 2:17 how I used to lead the faithful
27:4 in procession to the house of God,
 amid shouts of joy and thanksgiving,
 among the feasting throng.
43:5; ⁶Why are you so downcast, my soul,
Mk why so troubled within me?
14:34; Hope in God; for I will praise him again,
Jn 12:27 my Savior and my God.
Lm 3:20 ⁷My soul is downcast when I remember
 from these lands of Jordan and Hermon,
 "Where are you, small mountain?"
88:8; ⁸Deep calls to deep in the roar of your
Jon 2:4 waterfalls;
 your waves and torrents have gone over me.
⁹May Yahweh bestow his love by day,
 by night, his song is upon my lips—
 a prayer to the God of my life.
18:3; ¹⁰I say to God, my rock,
43:2 "Why have you forgotten me?
 Why do I go about mourning,
 oppressed by the enemy?"
¹¹My whole being suffers in mortal agony,
 as my adversaries continually taunt me,
 "Where is your God?"
¹²Why are you so downcast, my soul,
 why so troubled within me?
 Hope in God; for again I will praise him—
 my savior and my God.

• **42 (41)** The Levite is far from Jerusalem. He is exiled in the land, where the Jordan rises. The sound of its falling waters is to him a dirge for the lost happiness of the Temple feasts.

We, too, are in exile and this psalm should deepen our consciousness of it. But our longings are not for 'this mountain' (Jn 4:21) or that, as the psalmist's was for Zion. Our Lord has brought us a higher hope. Our destiny is to 'see the face of God,' not only in the mediating forms of sacred ceremony. We are to see him 'as he is' (1 Jn 3:2). Ask God for the desire for heaven. We, too, like the Levite, are exiles here below, as long as we do not see the face of God. It is good that we are not too quickly satisfied with a few beautiful ceremonies.

Long for God, as a deer longs for flowing streams, and our happiness will last forever and not just for long.

• **43 (42)** The author of this psalm recalls with nostalgia, the Temple in Jerusalem and the splendid ceremonies of past times. He is now living in a foreign land, where his words, his culture, his faith, mean nothing to anyone. ‘Where is your God?’ they say, and he asks himself: ‘Who am I?’ A fervent call to God and cries of hope are features of this psalm, like a refrain repeated three times. Who among us would not be able to personalize this psalm? Human progress, be it ever so great and salutary, brings new problems and stirs up in us new desires. We are at times mindful that we have been created for something greater. Nothing of that fully gratifies us, and death is always at the end. How can we revive those moments when we knew true joy?

This psalm is very appropriate to experience the felt absence of God and ardently desire his presence.

• **44 (43)** The problem of evil is posed here on a national plane. At this level, the book of Judges probably solved it: if the nation had sinned, the nation was punished. For individuals, this solution had been found unsatisfactory. The experience of Job and many others had disproved the necessary connection between sin and offering. Here, the solution is surprisingly found effective, even for the nation at large, and the baffled psalmist can only pray. Elijah had ironically suggested to the prophets of Baal that their god might be asleep—can Yahweh sleep as well? But the psalmist’s language has the extravagance born of urgency, as our own might have been, when we think of the persecuted devout Christians. It is not our business to penetrate the mystery; it is our business to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters. Leave the rest to God!

PSALM 43 (42)

Longing for God’s dwelling place.

¹Make justice, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people; deliver me from the wicked and deceitful.

74:22;
119:154

²You are my God, my stronghold, why have you cast me out? Why should I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?

44:10,24;
60:12;
74:1;
42:10

³Send forth your light and your truth; let them be my guide, let them take me to your holy mountain, to the place where you reside.

⁴Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my gladness and delight. I will praise you with the lyre and harp, O God, my God.

⁵Why are you so downcast, my soul, why so troubled within me? Hope in God; for again I will praise him—my Savior and my God.

42:6, 12

PSALM 44 (43)

God’s people in time of disaster: a national lament.

²With our ears, O God, we have heard; our ancestors have declared to us the works you did in their days of old. ³You drove out the nations and settled them in their land; you conquered the peoples to make room for them.

78:3

78:55;
80:9

⁴For it was not with their own sword that they conquered the land nor were they victors by their own hand; but it was by your right hand and arm, and by the light of your countenance; for you truly loved them.

Dt 8:
17-18;
Hos 1:7

⁵It is you, my King and my God, who ordain victories for Jacob.

74:12

⁶Through you, we batter down our foes; through your name we shatter our enemies.

1K22:11;
Ps 60:14;
108:14

⁷For it is not in my bow that I trust, nor in my sword to make me victorious.

⁸But it is you who give us victory; you, who bring our adversaries to shame.

37:39-
40;
132:18

⁹It is always in God that we find glory. Forever shall we praise your name.

60:12 ¹⁰Yet now, you have rejected and humbled us; you no longer go forth with our armies.

Jdg 2:14 ¹¹You have let our enemies drive us back and our adversaries plunder us.

Lev 26:33 ¹²You have let us be driven for slaughter, like sheep scattered among nations as captives.

Is 52:3 ¹³You have handed us over to them, for nothing: the sale was of no benefit for you.

79:4 ¹⁴You have made us the butt of our neighbors' insult, the scorn and laughingstock of those around us. ¹⁵You have made us a byword among the nations; they look at us and shake their heads.

69:8 ¹⁶All day long, my disgrace is before me; and shame covers my face, ¹⁷at the voice of the one who mocks and reviles, in the presence of the enemy and the avenger.

¹⁸All this has happened to us, although we have not forgotten you; nor have we been untrue to your Covenant.

¹⁹Our heart has not turned back nor have our steps faltered; ²⁰yet, you have crushed us, in the desert of the snakes, and covered us with deep darkness.

Jer 17:10 ²¹Had we forgotten the name of our God and stretched forth our hands to an alien god, ²²God would have discovered this; for the secrets of the heart are not hidden from him.

Rom 8:36 ²³For your sake, we are slain all day, and accounted as sheep for slaughter.

Is 51:9 ²⁴Awake, O Lord! Why are you asleep? Arise! Reject us not forever.

10:11 ²⁵Why hide your face from us? Why forget our misery and woes? ²⁶Our souls are humbled in the dust, our bodies smashed to the ground.

3:8; 36:2 ²⁷Come to our help, deliver us, for the sake of your kindness.

PSALM 45 (44)

Royal wedding song.

²My heart is moved by an exalted theme as I deliver my ode to the king, my tongue as nimble as a writer's pen.

Ezk 28: 12, 17 ³You are the finest among all others; your lips are anointed with graciousness, for God has blessed you forever.

On the one hand, the psalmist praises God expressing full faith and confidence in Him and then, on the other hand, blames God for his misfortunes! When our focus is not on our target, it is impossible to gain success. At such times, we have only ourselves to blame, not God. Consider Peter in Mathew 14:29-31, with faith he began to walk on water towards our Lord, and then when his focus changed, he panicked and began to sink. And, finally when he said, "Lord, save me!" Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him. Are we all not in some way or the other like Peter? But Peter changed and gained eternal salvation and like Peter we too can gain eternal life, if we change!

We can pray with this psalm, feeling the pain of the Church, the pain of our brothers and sisters, who are treated as sheep at the slaughterhouse. But there is a Redeemer who will rescue us.

• **45 (44)** Christians feels that they must recite this psalm in praise of the Messiah-King. The Jewish tradition before him did the same, but the Christian has to make a further adjustment. The 'bride' is no longer the old Israel but the new 'Israel of God,' the new Jerusalem prepared as

a bride, adorned for her husband (Rev 21:2). More specifically, the liturgy identifies this bride, with those who have dedicated their virginity to God. And yet, the original meaning of the psalm is beautiful too. Love and marriage are seen as noble, God-blessed things, when wife and husband help each other to work 'for the cause of truth, goodness and right.'

This psalm could have been written on the occasion of the marriage of a king of Israel to a foreign princess. Perhaps it was a poetic call to the chosen people to fully enter into a covenant with its God, its spouse. God made himself present through his King-Messiah, anointed by him (v. 9). Israel is party to the divine marriage, followed by all the nations, who accept the revelation of God and salvation.

This can also be applied to the Church and to each of us. Baptism is a total gift to Christ. For our part the gift remains with words and gestures, but we already belong to him and a whole life is not too long, for that to become a reality.

'Forget your fathers, and think of your sons' (v. 17). We can see here Jesus' promises to those who leave all to serve him.

⁴Gird your sword upon your thigh, O mighty one, array yourself with splendor and majesty.

⁵Glorious and triumphant, ride on, for the sake of truth, for a just cause. You will see marvelous deeds of your right hand.

⁶Your arrows are sharp, O king, they pierce the hearts of your enemies; nations fall beneath your feet.

⁷Your throne, O God, will last forever; a scepter of justice is your scepter.

Is 11:
3-5;
Heb 1:
8-9

⁸You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore, God, your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness, above your fellow kings.

1S 16:
6-13

⁹Your robes are fragrant with myrrh, aloes and cassia. The music of strings gladdens your palace, adorned and glowing with ivory.

1K
22:39

¹⁰Among your ladies of honor are daughters of kings; at your right hand, in gold of Ophir, stands the queen.

Song
6:8

¹¹Listen, O daughter, pay attention; forget your father's house and your nation, ¹²and your beauty will charm the king, for he is your lord.

Ru 1:16

¹³The people of Tyre will bow before him. The wealthiest nations will seek your favor.

72:10-11

¹⁴All glorious, as she enters, is the princess, in her gold-woven robes.

¹⁵She is led, in royal attire, to the king; following behind is her train of virgins.

¹⁶Amid cheers and general rejoicing, they enter the palace of the king.

¹⁷Forget your fathers and think of your sons; you will make them princes throughout the land.

Gen
17:6;
35:11

¹⁸I will make your name famous through all generations; may all nations praise you forever!

PSALM 46 (45)

Boundless trust in God's power.

• **46 (45)** It always gives Israel a feeling of security, to remember that her God is lord of all the

²God is our strength and protection, an ever-present help in affliction.

62:9

Is 54:10; Job 9:5-6 ³We will not fear, therefore;
though the earth be shaken
and the mountains plunge into the seas;
93:3 ⁴though its waters foam and roar;
though the mountains quake and totter.

For Yahweh of hosts is with us,
the God of Jacob, our stronghold.

⁵There is a river whose streams bring joy to the
City of God,
the holy place, where the Most High dwells.
68:17; 125:1 ⁶God is within, the city cannot quake,
for God's help is upon it at the break of day.

Rev 11:18; Ps 29:3 ⁷Kingdoms tottered, nations were in turmoil;
at the sound of his voice the earth melts away.

Is 7:14; 8:10; Ps 9:10; 48:4 ⁸For with us is Yahweh of hosts,
the God of Jacob, our refuge.

66:5 ⁹Come, see the works of Yahweh—
the marvelous things he has done in the world.

76:4; Hos 2:20 ¹⁰He has put an end to wars,
broken the bows and splintered the spears,
set the shields and chariots afire.

Dt 32:39 ¹¹Be still, know that I am God.
I am exalted among the nations,
exalted over the earth!

¹²With us is Yahweh of hosts,
the God of Jacob, our refuge.

PSALM 47 (46)

To God, king of the world.

Zep 3:14-15 ²Clap your hands, all you peoples;
acclaim God with shouts of joy.

68:36; 76:8 ³For Yahweh, the Most High, is to be feared;
he is a great king all over the earth.

⁴He brings people under our dominion
and puts nations under our feet.

⁵He chose our inheritance for us—
the pride of Jacob whom he loves!

24:7-10 ⁶God ascends amid joyful shouts,
Yahweh amid trumpet blasts.

30:5 ⁷Sing praises to God, sing praises!
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!

⁸God is King of all the earth;
sing to him a hymn of praise.

armies of heaven and earth. The same power controls the universe and subdues hostile nations. That is why the psalmist speaks in terms of cosmic catastrophe and is still confident. In a tottering world, there is one unshaken Rock, the God of Jacob. And meanwhile a life-giving string keeps Jerusalem, the center of this disturbed world, safe and prosperous, because where God is, there is peace. One may think of the baptismal water that washes round the city we call Church.

Our certainty does not rest on the Temple of God, but on the God of the Temple. It is good to pray with this psalm, if we want to cultivate this certainty rather than a false security.

• **47 (46)** 'Your kingdom come,' we pray, and yet God's kingdom has already come. But we are thinking of our own acceptance of it, our practical acknowledgment of God's sovereignty. However, there is always comfort in throwing responsibility on God, as nations, their king and military leader once did. Hence the note of joy in this psalm, and God 'goes up' to the sound of it. No doubt, this refers to the procession with the Ark, brought up the Temple hill. For us there is another 'ascension.' The glorified body of Christ has thrown off the chains of place and time, and has power to lead us always and everywhere. This is surely a psalm for the feast of the Ascension.

For as long as we express the desire of the Our Father: 'Your kingdom come' we could pray with this psalm. St. Paul (1 Thes 16-18) says, 'Rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks to God at every moment. This is the will of God, your vocation as Christians.' And, as Christians, we have added reasons to rejoice because of the Ascension of our Lord and His promise to take us to Him.

⁹For God now rules over the nations,
God reigns from his holy Throne.

Is 6:1

¹⁰The leaders of the nations rally, together
with the people of the God of Abraham.
For in his hands are the great of the earth,
God reigns far above.

Is 2:2

PSALM 48 (47)

The invincible city of God.

• **48 (47)** The pagans may speak of the mountains of the terrifying and inaccessible gods, but the small hill of Zion is dignified by the presence of the one God. It is a homely place (v. 13). For all its insignificance, it can look down on every high place on earth (Ps 68:17). There is a strong sense of national pride in this psalm. The assertions of innocence is softened by the free acknowledgment that all comes from God. It is accompanied, too, by a full acceptance of moral responsibility. The Temple is the place to ponder God's love for his people, but it is here also, that his commands must be joyfully received.

What are the places of the presence of God? The outskirts of the city? Refugee camps? Sick or maimed bodies? We need to tell the next generation where our God is. God is our Guide. So, no matter how complex our lives become, we have no need to fear. For, God will guide us through to our destination.

²Great is Yahweh,
most worthy of praise in the City of God,
his holy mountain.

96:4

³Beautifully elevated, it is the joy of all the earth
—Mount Zion, heavenly mountain,
the City of the great King.

Mt 5:35

⁴Here, within her lines of defense,
God has shown himself to be a sure fortress.

⁵The kings assembled together,
advanced toward the city.

⁶But as soon as they saw it, they were
astounded;

68:13

they panicked and took to flight.

⁷Seized with fear, they trembled,
like a woman in travail,

15:14

⁸or like the ships of Tarshish,
shattered by a strong wind from the east.

Jer 18:17

⁹As we have heard, so have we seen,
in the City of Yahweh of hosts,
in the City of our God,
the City God founded forever.

¹⁰Let us recall your unfailing love,
O God, inside your temple.

¹¹Let your praise, as does your name, O God,
reach to the ends of the earth.

113:3

Your right hand is ever victorious.

¹²Let Mount Zion rejoice;
let the villages of Judah be glad,
for your justice prevails.

97:8

¹³Walk around Zion; count her towers;

78:4 ¹⁴consider her ramparts; examine her castles,
that you may tell the next generation,
¹⁵that such is God;
God is our guide forever.

PSALM 49 (48)

The problem of injustice, pain and death.

Pro 8:4 ²Hear this, all you peoples!
Listen, all you inhabitants of the world,
³high and low together,
rich and poor alike!

⁴My mouth will speak wisdom,
my deep thoughts will bring discernment.

78:2 ⁵To a proverb I will incline my ear,
and solve my riddle to the rhythm of my lyre.

⁶Why should I fear when evil days come,
when wicked deceivers ring me round—
⁷those who trust in their wealth
and boast of their great riches?

Jer 9:22;
Lk 12:
16:21 ⁸For no ransom avails for one's life;
there is no price one can give to God for it.

Mt 16:26 ⁹For redeeming one's life
demands too high a price,
and all is lost forever.
¹⁰Who can remain forever alive
and never see the grave?

Sir 11:19 ¹¹For we see that the wise die,
and pass away like the fool and the stupid,
leaving to others their fortune and wealth.
¹²Their graves are their eternal homes,
from generation to generation,
no matter how big the tracts of land they own.

Ecd 3:
18:21 ¹³People of wealth have no thought that
they will be silenced like the beasts.
¹⁴This is the fate of people trusting
themselves,
the future of those who rely on their strength.
¹⁵Like sheep led to the grave,
they have death, as their shepherd and ruler;
quickly, their form will be consumed
in the world of the dead, which is their home.

Hos 13:14 ¹⁶But God will rescue my soul from the grave
by receiving me unto himself.

• **49 (48)** This psalm reminds us of how temporary our lives are! At first, we feel we are back to the over-simplified solution of the problem of evil: the prosperity of the wicked is no difficulty because it is so short-lived. But there seems to be a sharp distinction in this psalm. Wealth cannot buy everlasting in life (v. 10); it cannot 'ransom the soul' but God can ransom it (v. 16). And indeed the solemn opening verses suggest a noteworthy revelation. At least, we are on the threshold of the Good News of eternal life. It is noteworthy to be reminded 'to store up treasure with God, where no moth or rust can destroy nor thief come and steal it' (Lk 12:21).

This psalm is appropriate to guide our life. May it not be shepherded by death, but by the Good Shepherd.

¹⁷Fear not, when someone grows rich,
when his power becomes oppressively great;
¹⁸for nothing will he take when he dies;
his wealth and pomp he will leave behind.

1Tim 6:7

¹⁹Though he praised himself in his lifetime,
“All will say that I have enjoyed life,”
²⁰he will join the generation of his forebears,
who will never again see the light.

Job 10:
21-22

²¹People of wealth have no thought that
they will be silenced like the beasts.

PSALM 50 (49)

The true worship.

• **50 (49)** Lip service is not enough, nor is outward ritual observance. The announcement is introduced with solemnity. It uses a poetic device called ‘theophany,’ in which, God appears as the Lord of nature. His people offer sacrifices which God does not need. With great candor, the psalmist presents God as condemning his own people for mistaking the outward ritual for the religion of the heart: honesty, purity, kindness. These are the true sacrifices of thanksgiving. The lesson is applicable to us all. The liturgy must have self-involvement as its purpose. The offering we make is the offering of ourselves in union with the sacrifice of Christ. In the morning, this is an offering in principle but the rest of the day is a confirmation of this offering in practice.

God is coming to judge his people. He condemns those who replace the obedience of the heart, with offerings and material sacrifices, and those who recite the commandments, instead of practicing them.

Those who love God and hate their brothers and sisters are liars (1 John 4:20) and atheists. While we pray this psalm, we can listen to the following question: “You do this, and I must be quiet? Do you think I am like you?” (21). May these questions resound in us and let us honor God with a sacrifice of praise, made fitting by a good relationship with our neighbor.

¹The God of gods, Yahweh has spoken;
he summons the earth, from the rising of the sun
to its setting.

Jos
22:22;
Dt 10:17

²God has shone from Zion, perfect in beauty.

48:3;
Dt 33:2

³God is no longer silent, he comes;
before him is a devouring fire,
around him a raging storm.

83:2;
Dt 32:22;
Dn 7:10;
Job 40:6

⁴He calls to the heavens above,
and to the earth below,
that he may judge his people:

⁵“Gather before me, my faithful ones,
who made a Covenant with me by sacrifice.”

24:4-8

⁶The heavens will proclaim his sentence,
for God himself is the judge.

⁷“Hear, O my people, for I am speaking.
I will accuse you, O Israel,
I am God, your God!

81:9

⁸Not for your sacrifices do I reprove you,
for your burnt offerings are ever before me.

⁹I need no bull from your stalls,
nor he-goat from your pens.

¹⁰For I own all the beasts of the forest
and the animals of my thousand hills.

¹¹All the birds of the air I know;
all that move in the fields are mine.

¹²I need not tell you if I were hungry,
for mine is the world and all that it contains.

24:1

¹³Do I eat the flesh of bulls
or drink the blood of goats?

¹⁴Yet, offer to God a sacrifice of thanks,
and fulfill your vows to the Most High.

Hos 14:3;
Heb
13:15;
Mt 5:33

¹⁵ Call on me in time of calamity;
I will deliver you, and you will glorify me.”

¹⁶ But God says this to the wicked:
“What right have you to mouth my laws,
or to talk about my Covenant?”

¹⁷ You hate my commands
and cast my words behind you.

Rom 2:
21-22 ¹⁸ You join a thief when you meet one;
you keep company with adulterers.

¹⁹ You have a mouth of evil
and a deceitful tongue.

²⁰ You speak ill of your brother,
and slander your own mother’s son.

²¹ Because I was silent while you did these things,
you thought I was like you.

But now I rebuke you
and make this charge against you.

Hos
5:14 ²² Give this a thought, you, who forget God;
lest I tear you to pieces with no one to help you.

91:16 ²³ Those who give with thanks, offerings, honor me;
but the one who walks blamelessly,
I will show him the salvation of God.”

PSALM 51 (50)

2S
11-12 **Prayer of contrition: fourth psalm of repentance.**

41:5;
Is 43:25;
44:22 ³ Have mercy on me, O God, in your love.
In your great compassion blot out my sin.

Ezk
36:25;
37:23 ⁴ Wash me thoroughly of my guilt;
cleans me of evil.

Job
31:33 ⁵ For I acknowledge my wrongdoings
and have my sins ever in mind.

Lk
15:18;
Rom 3:4 ⁶ Against you alone, have I sinned;
what is evil in your sight, I have done.

You are right when you pass sentence;
and blameless, in your judgment.

Jn 9:34;
Rom
7:14 ⁷ For I have been guilt-ridden from birth;
a sinner from my mother’s womb.

⁸ I know you desire truth in the heart;
teach me wisdom in my inmost being.

Is 1:18 ⁹ Cleanse me, with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.

Ezk 37:
1-14 ¹⁰ Fill me with joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

• **51 (50)** This is the finest of the ‘penitential psalms.’ Man stands guilty and unafraid before God. Indeed, he sees his guilt, as a reason for mercy and an excuse for hope. A deep sense of sin is already a step toward the sanctity of God. It opens the door for his eager mercy. But Our Lord takes us even further than the psalmist. He teaches us to cry not ‘God!’ but ‘Father!’ He bids us think of that father, who ran to meet the son who had left him, the father who took the son in his arms and kissed him: ‘My son was lost and is found’ (Lk 15:24). Our trust in the Father’s forgiveness generously given should exceed that of the psalmist.

It is good to pray with this psalm, when we feel overwhelmed by our guilt, be it against God or against our brothers and sisters, and we seek the goodness of God, who justifies us.

When we receive the sacrament

of reconciliation, we meet Jesus himself, the Savior who intercedes, and the Father who pardons. Each of our confessions is a joyful celebration of God's mercy and a source of renewal.

¹¹ Turn your face away from my sins and blot out all my offenses.

¹² Create in me, O God, a pure heart; give me a new and steadfast spirit.

¹³ Do not cast me out of your presence nor take your holy spirit from me.

¹⁴ Give me again, the joy of your salvation; and sustain me, with a willing spirit.

¹⁵ Then I will show wrongdoers your ways and sinners will return to you.

¹⁶ Deliver me, O God, from the guilt of blood; and of your justice, I shall sing aloud.

¹⁷ O Yahweh, open my lips, and I will declare your praise.

¹⁸ You take no pleasure in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, you would not delight in it.

¹⁹ O God, my sacrifice is a broken spirit; a contrite heart, you will not despise.

²⁰ Shower Zion with your favor: rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

²¹ Then, you will delight in fitting sacrifices, in burnt offerings, and bulls, offered on your altar.

Ezk
11:19;
38:26;
2Cor
5:17

Is 63:11

Ezk 6:9

102:
14-18

4:6

PSALM 52 (51)

The fate of the deceitful.

1S 21:8;
22:9

• **52 (51)** It is rare and somewhat unsettling, to find a psalmist denouncing an individual. It is an embarrassment for public worship. The only solution would seem to be to sing the psalm, as it were against oneself. But perhaps it is impious to suggest that the first part had better not be sung at all. When revelation had advanced so much, that earlier attitudes become unacceptable, it might be preferable to ignore them. It is true that no word of God can be idle, but this does not mean to say that it speaks immediately to us. It was enough for the psalmist to condemn the liar. We have learnt to condemn only the lie.

Wherever power is affirmed in detriment of human dignity, we could pray this psalm, which places before us, the alternative

³ Why boast of your wickedness, strong man? Why boast all day long, ⁴ that you are plotting crimes?

Your tongue is like a sharp razor; ⁵ you love evil more than good, and falsehood more than truth. ⁶ You love words that inflict harm, O you deceitful tongue!

⁷ But God will bring you down forever; he will snatch you; tear you away from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living.

⁸ The good will know fear at the sight; they will say, concerning his fate:

⁹ "See the one who would not rely on God, but trusted in riches, and drew strength from wickedness."

¹⁰ But I am as a green olive tree that thrives in the house of God: I trust in God's unfailing love forever and ever.

Job
18:14;
Pro 2:22

40:4

Pro
11:28

1:3;
92:13;
13:6

¹¹I will praise you forever, for all you have done; and proclaim your good name before the faithful ones.

PSALM 53 (52)

The fools.

¹⁴ ²The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, their ways are wicked; not one of them does good.

³From heaven, God looks down upon the people, to see, if there is anyone who seeks God and understands.

⁴None! They have all fallen away. Depraved—they are all alike. There is no one who does good; no, not even one.

⁵Will these evildoers never learn? They devour my people, just as they devour food, and never call on God.

⁶There they are—afraid when there is nothing to be feared. God will scatter their bones; they will be put to shame because God has rejected them.

⁷May I see Israel’s salvation coming forth from Zion! When God restores his people’s fortune, Jacob will be glad, Israel will rejoice.

PSALM 54 (53)

Cry for God’s help.

¹⁵ ^{23:19} ²O God, deliver me, by your name! Vindicate me, by your power!

³By your name, O God, save me; you, the Valiant, uphold my cause.

⁴Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth.

^{86:14} ⁵Strangers are against me—the ruthless seek my life; they have no regard for God.

⁶See, God is my helper; the Lord upholds my life.

⁷May their evil plots rebound on them; in your faithfulness, destroy them!

^{52:11} ⁸Freely will I offer sacrifice to you, and praise your name, O Yahweh, for it is good.

of trusting in money/power, or in God. Jesus has shown us the way and taught us to be humble. If we follow Jesus’ way, we too can enjoy God’s unfailing love forever and ever.

• **53 (52)** This psalm, with a few and slight variations, is a repetition of Psalm 14. The “fool” in the Scriptures is not an ignoramus or a theoretical atheist. Agnosticism was a phenomenon apparently unknown to the Old Testament writers living in a polytheistic world. The fool is one, who has his values all wrong, and is encouraged by past experience, to behave as if God would never take action. The psalmist states that the world is full of people like this. But their time will come and God will save his people from them, whether they are traitors to Israel or enemies from outside. We should never count ourselves exempt from Scriptural denunciation. For example, how often have we thought ‘I thank God I am not as this Pharisee?’ We are ‘foolish’ too. The traitor inside us establishes his own convenient hierarchy of values. In this and in many other psalms, we pray God to destroy what is bad in our own selves.

• **54 (53)** The ‘name’ and the ‘power’ of God appear synonymous in the opening verse of the psalm. The ‘name’ of a person is the expression of his individuality and his peculiar possession. When we need access to someone, we say ‘May I use your name?’ The ‘name’ is therefore operative. It unlocks doors. In this way, Israel was privileged to use the name of God, either to call on him or to threaten its enemies. But now the Christians use an even more specific name. It is a name greater than all others: Jesus! His name gives access to God and threatens everything hostile to our peace.

The recognition of the divine name and the affirmation of God's goodness open this psalm to the New Testament. If we dream about a world without injustice and discover that God is good, we can pray with this psalm. If we turn to Jesus our Savior, then we will be saved.

• **55 (54)** Distress and discouragement are strongly marked here as in the any other psalm. There is no description of bodily suffering. The wounds of the psalmist go deeper. For this reason, one feels that the psalm has a more general and profound appeal. Despite all the protestation of trust in God, we can sense a wavering which attacks us all. We have Judases; we perhaps are Judases ourselves. This apostle must have 'walked in the house of God' with Jesus and yet betrayed him. Have we? Do we? The psalmist ends exhorting us, to a like-trust in the God of justice.

Judas gave the Lord away (Mt 26:23). We can see how disturbed Jesus was in John 13:21; Mark 14:33, etc. If we want to ward off the attack of evil in all its variations, including the betrayal of the friend, we can pray with this psalm. It will do us good to cry, and even weep, as long as we attain trust in God.

⁹You have delivered me from calamity; and I 118:7 look down on my foes.

PSALM 55 (54)

Distress of a man betrayed by his friends.

²Listen to my prayer, O God, do not be deaf to my pleading; ³give heed to me and answer me. 17:1; 86:6

I am greatly troubled ⁴at the outcry of the enemy and the clamor of the wicked.

I am distraught at the way they revile me and persecute me in their fury.

⁵My heart agonizes within me; the terrors of death fall upon me. ⁶I tremble in fear—horror has got the better of me. Job 4:14

⁷I said, "If I had wings, like a dove, I would fly away and be at rest;

⁸I would seek a home in the desert, ⁹or hurry to find a cave, for shelter from the tempest." Jer 9:1; Rev 12:6

¹⁰O Yahweh, shatter their plans. In the city, I see strife and violence; ¹¹day and night, they prowl about its walls, while inside, evil prevails. Gen 11:7

¹²Forces of tyranny and treachery are at work, undermining the city.

¹³If it were a rival insulting me, I could bear with him; if it were a foe in pursuit of me, I could hide from him.

¹⁴But it is you, an equal of mine, my bosom friend, my companion; ¹⁵whose fellowship I enjoyed, as we walked together in the house of God. 41:10; Jer 9:3

¹⁶Let death come upon them suddenly; let them go down to the grave alive, for within them, evil and mischief thrive. Num 16:33

¹⁷But in God I seek refuge; Yahweh will rescue me.

¹⁸Morning, evening, and even at noon, I cry out my grievance and moan; surely he will hear my voice. Dn 6:11

¹⁹He will deliver me in safety from my opponents, for they are many.

²⁰God, who is enthroned forever, will hear me and humble them; for they do not repent, nor do they stand in awe of God. 29:10

²¹My friend has attacked his associates and has violated his pact with them.

5:10; 57:5 ²²His words were smoother than butter; yet, war was in his heart; his utterances, more soothing than oil, were swords ready and drawn.

1P 5:7 ²³Place your burden on Yahweh, and he will sustain you; for he never allows the upright to fall.

102:25 ²⁴But you, O God, will cast the wicked into a pit; bloodthirsty and treacherous, they will not live out half their days. As for me, I trust in you alone, O Yahweh.

1S 21: 11-13 **PSALM 56 (55)**

Unshakable confidence in God.

²O God, show your mercy to me, for my foes are in hot pursuit; they press their attack on me all the time.

³My accusers pursue me all day long; many attack me. ⁴But when I am afraid, O Mighty One, I put my trust in you;

60:13 ⁵In God, whose word I praise; in God I trust, without fear. What can mortals do against me?

⁶All day long they hatch their evil plans, plotting mischief to injure my cause.

⁷They conspire, and lurk around, watching my every move; bent upon taking my life.

Jer 18:23 ⁸They must not be allowed to go unpunished; therefore, O God, in your fury, bring the nations down.

⁹You have a record of my laments; my tears are stored in your wineskin. Are they not written on your scroll?

9:4 ¹⁰My enemies turn back when I call on you for help; now I know, that God is for me.

Heb 13:6; Ps 118:6 ¹¹In God, whose word I praise; ¹²in God I trust, without fear. What can mortals do against me?

¹³I am bound to you by vows, O God; I shall offer my thanksgiving.

Job 33:30 ¹⁴For you have rescued my soul from death and my feet from stumbling; that I might walk in God's presence, in the light of the living.

• **56 (55)** 'You have a record of my laments.' The sentence is more graphic in Hebrew: 'My tears are stored in your wineskin?' (v. 9). This is what professional mourners did. The tears were shed, as it were, by proxy, and left at the grave, as evidence of grief. But here the tears are not professional, God knows it, and they are really worth keeping. We can only know what God thinks of human suffering from his Son, God's Word to us. When Jesus saw Martha weeping he started to cry himself (Jn 11:33-34). But in the end, God 'will wipe all the tears away' and there will be no more crying (Rev 21:4).

It is good to pray with this psalm, on the face of so much suffering and so many tears that don't find a human answer.

This is a prayer of the millions of oppressed who live, and no doubt will die crushed. 'You, Lord, have gathered our tears!'

• **57 (56)** The vehemence of the psalmists is a constant surprise. Heaven knows what some of them must have gone through. Even their joy seems to shine through tears. This individual lament, followed by thanksgiving, is similar in form and content to the preceding psalm and to many others. Nevertheless, there is more triumphant joy in the conclusion. The 'morning' in the psalm often stands for the dawning of new hope. The psalmist is awake, shouting so loud, that the personified Dawn, that is relief, will have to come.

The prayer of the psalmist in verse 4, 'may he send from heaven a savior...' is answered. God did send us Jesus Christ as our Savior. Therefore, we have so much to thank God for and to exalt His Holy Name! In fact, in Mathew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4 Jesus teaches us how to pray so that we may thank God and allow His Glory to be all over the earth.

This psalm could be the prayer of the one who waits, with total trust, for calamities to end. The glory of the Most High fills the earth.

• **58 (57)** The Psalmist is obviously troubled by all the evildoers around him. The gods and the wicked are obstructing God's primacy in the world and distorting his image. Yet, he is confident that in the end, the upright will prevail. For, there is a God and He alone rules and He knows whom and how to judge. Let us not be burdened by such people, because Jesus in Mathew 11:28-30 invites us by saying 'Come to me'...and 'my yoke is good and my burden is light.'

We cannot close our eyes to Evil. It exists only because there

PSALM 57 (56)

In time of danger: a national lament.

1S 22:
1-2;
24:1-9

²Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy; for my soul takes refuge in you; I will find shelter in the shadow of your wings, till the disaster has passed. 17:8

³I call on God the Most High; on God, who has done everything for me: ⁴may he send from heaven, a savior, and put my oppressors to shame. May God send me his love and faithfulness. 43:3

⁵I lie prostrate in the midst of lions that greedily devour people; their teeth are pointed spears and arrows; their tongues, sharpened swords. 17:12;
Dn 6:17;
Ps 64:4

⁶Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Your glory be over all the earth! 108:6

⁷They have set a snare for my steps; my soul was bowed down in distress. They dug a pit along my path, but they themselves fell into it. Lm 1:13;
Ps 7:16

⁸My heart is steadfast, O God; my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make music. 108:2-6

⁹Awake, my soul; awake, O harp and lyre! I will wake the dawn.

¹⁰I will give thanks to you, O Yahweh, among the peoples; I will sing praise to you among the nations.

¹¹For your love reaches to the heavens, and your faithfulness, to the clouds. ¹²Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth! 36:6

PSALM 58 (57)

Condemnation of injustice.

²You gods, are your decrees just; and are your judgments upright? 82:2

³No, you willfully commit crimes; you deal in violence and corruption.

⁴Even from the womb, the wicked go astray; from birth, they are wayward liars.

⁵They are poisonous, like deadly snakes; deaf as the adder ⁶that blocks its ears, so as not to hear the charmer's voice casting spells. Dt 32:33
Ecl 10:11

⁷Break the teeth in their mouths, O God; tear out the fangs of the lions, O Yahweh. 3:8

⁸Let them vanish, like spilled water; let them be trodden down, like grass that withers. Job 11:16;
Ps 18:15

Job 3:16 ⁹Let them be like snails that sink into slime, like untimely births that never see the sun; ¹⁰like green grass that is burned before the thorns are dry—let them be swept away!

35:27; 68:24 ¹¹The upright will rejoice when they are avenged; they will bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked.

1:3; Job 19:29 ¹²Then will people say, “Surely, the righteous are rewarded; surely, there is a God, who gives judgment on earth.”

PSALM 59 (58)

Appeal to God, the stronghold.

1S 19: 11-17 ²Deliver me from my enemies, O God, from those who rise up against me.

³Deliver me from evildoers; rescue me from the bloodthirsty.

Pro 1:11 ⁴Look, they lie in wait for my life; the mighty conspiring against me, for no fault of mine, O Yahweh.

7:7 ⁵I have done them no wrong; yet, they prepare to attack me. Rise and help me; look on my plight, ⁶O Yahweh God of hosts, God of Israel! Arise and punish the nations; have no mercy on the wicked traitors.

22:17 ⁷Each evening they return, howling like dogs, prowling about the city. ⁸To their mind, God does not hear or see their wicked deeds.

2:4 ⁹But you, O Yahweh, laugh at them; you look down upon the wicked.

¹⁰O my Strength, I look up, to you; for you, O God, are my fortress.

54:9 ¹¹My loving God will come to help me and let me see my enemies fall.

¹²But slay them, lest my people forget; just shake them by your power, and bring them down, O Yahweh, our shield.

¹³Give us your help against the foe, for human help is worthless.

For the curses and lies they utter, ¹⁴destroy them in your vengeance; destroy them till they are no more. Then it will be known, that God rules over Jacob, to the ends of the earth.

¹⁵Each evening, let them return, howling like dogs, prowling about the city, ¹⁶roaming about for food, growling, and never filled.

are human beings, ready to commit atrocities. What can we do? We express our prayer, without fearing our own vehemence. We ask the just God to intervene. The expression of anger is not incompatible with Jesus (cf. Mark 3:5). This psalm can nourish our hunger for justice. It is not anti-Christian, as long as the beatitude of those who hunger and thirst for justice stands.

• **59 (58)** It is possible that the thought is on a national plane. The ‘foes’ are a danger to the whole nation and to the psalmist himself: ‘Slay them, lest my people forget’ (v. 12). The enemies seem to come from outside (the ‘traitors’ of v. 6 are paralleled with ‘the nations’). We too have our enemies from outside. There are so many hostile influences in our age, as in every other, pariah dogs, persistent and ready to snap. We cannot live behind closed doors. We have inside us our immunity—or rather the immunity that comes from God, to those who are aware of him.

The psalmist is indeed troubled by his enemies and asks God to deliver him from them. He is confident that God will, because he says that God is his refuge and strength. We have had that assurance several times from Jesus, who in showing us the way, said, “Follow me.”

Only Jesus can rightfully speak the verses 4-5 of the psalm (cf. 1 P 2:22). The cities are full of ‘dogs’ and people live in constant shock. It is the time to pray with all those who are persecuted, condemned, and murdered.

¹⁷But I will sing of your might; in the morning I will sing of your love. For you have been a fortress to me, a refuge in time of distress. ¹⁸O my Strength, I will sing praises to you; for you, O God, are my stronghold; you are a loving God.

PSALM 60 (59)

After the defeat.

2S 8:
2...13;
18:2...12

• **60 (59)** This time, it is certainly the nation that laments. The occasion might even be identified with the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. It may be that the difficult verses 8-11 which have an archaic ring were taken from some earlier composition. In this section, we read the divine oracle given in answer to the initial appeal. David's kingdom and sphere of influence is God's possession. He can do what he likes with Moab, and Edom belongs to him. (He has 'to take off his sandal' over it, see Ruth 4:7). He will guard these jealously. God's property is always safe, as long as it remains true to itself.

The persecuted church also feels overcome and asks for help. Here is a psalm to pray with, in the face of the catastrophes afflicting humanity.

³O God, you have rejected us and have broken our defenses; you have been angry; but now turn back to us. 44:10

⁴You have shaken the land and torn it open; mend its cracks, for it totters. Hg 2:6

⁵You have made your people suffer; you have given us wine that makes us stagger. Is 51:17

⁶You set the banner behind us; and your people fled from bow and arrow.

⁷Help us and listen to us, that your beloved may be rescued. 108:
7-14

⁸God has spoken in his Sanctuary: "In triumph I will divide up Shechem and parcel out the Valley of Succoth.

⁹Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet, Judah my scepter. Gen
49:10

¹⁰Moab is my washbasin; upon Edom I cast my sandal; over Philistia I shout in triumph."

¹¹Who will take me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?

¹²Have you not rejected us, O God? You no longer go with our armies.

¹³Give us aid against the foe, for human help is not worth a straw. 56:5

¹⁴With God, we will gain victory; he will crush the enemy for us.

PSALM 61 (60)

Prayer of an exile.

• **61 (60)** We are back now among emphatically personal psalms (61 to 64). However, this one seems to be intended, for the use of the king. For Israel, when it did not forget, the king was only holding the kingdom on behalf of God. Two guards flanked his throne and their names were 'God's Love' and 'God's Protection.' It must, however, be admit-

²Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer.

³I call to you, from the ends of the earth; my heart grows faint. Set me high upon a rock; ⁴be my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy. 46:2

⁵Let me dwell in your tent, forever, and take refuge in your wings' shelter. 15:1;
17:8

⁶Indeed, you have heard my vows, O God, and the wish of those who fear your name.

21:5 ⁷Increase the days of the king's life; prolong his years for many generations.
 Is 16:5; Pro 20:28 ⁸May he ever be enthroned in God's presence; let your love and loyalty watch over him.
 66:13 ⁹So, I will sing praises to your name and fulfill my vows, day after day.

PSALM 62 (61)**God, the rock of strength: a psalm of confidence.**

Is 12:2 ²My soul finds rest in God alone; from him, comes my salvation.
 89:27 ³He alone, is my rock and salvation; with him as my stronghold, I shall not be overcome.
⁴How long will you assail with your threats, all of you, to bring someone down—as you would pull a wall or smash a fence?
⁵Indeed, they plan to topple me. They take pleasure in telling lies; with their mouths they praise, but in their hearts they curse.
 71:5 ⁶Find rest in God alone, O my soul; from him, comes my hope.
 Gen 49:18 ⁷He alone, is my rock and my salvation; with him as my stronghold, I shall not be overcome.
⁸On God, rests my salvation and my honor; he is my refuge, my mighty rock.
 Is 26:4 ⁹Trust in him at all times, my people; pour out your hearts before him; God is our refuge.
 39:6-7; Is 40:15 ¹⁰People of low rank are only a breath, important people, merely an illusion. If weighed together they are nothing, even lighter than a puff of wind.
 Job 31:25; Mt 19:22; 1Tim 6:17 ¹¹Do not set your heart on extortion, nor your hopes upon corrupt gain. Even if wealth accumulates, keep your heart detached.
 28:4; Jer 17:10; 25:14; 32:19; Ezk 18:30; Hos 12:3; Job 34:11; Pro 24:12; Sir 11:26; 16:12, 14; Rom 2:6; 2Tim 4:14 ¹²God has spoken one word, and I have heard two things: that power belongs to God;
¹³and yours, O Yahweh, is also mercy: you reward each one according to his deeds.

ted that verses 2-6 sound like the reflection—almost mystical—of a devout Israelite and that these have been offered to the king for his own meditation. No one who has any authority at all—and must have some—can afford to ignore the Rock on which he stands.

• **62 (61)** The Psalmist expresses faith in God, repeatedly in this psalm. The one solid foundation is God; the wise person does not build on sand, or else the winds and floods will bring the house down (Mt 7:24ff). There is an atmosphere of tranquil assurance in this psalm which we miss in many others, where we meet with almost frenzied appeal. In the Psalter, we can usually find a prayer to suit our moods.

Only God can be the rock, stronghold and fortress (3, 7, 8, 9) where human existence can be supported. Human beings have an alternative: leaning on their own power, or on divine power, trusting in riches, or in God. It is impossible to serve both God and money (cf. Mt 6:19, 24). Either trust in God or in riches: see 1 Timothy 6:17; James 4:13-14; 5:1-6. If we want to be messengers of trust, we must speak not only of ideas; we must first experience God as fortress and refuge.

The psalms are the prayer of a people always struggling and suffering violence. Look at the televised news, and the violence of the world will be sufficiently present for us, to pray this evening, the prayer of the real world that struggles to survive.

• **63 (62)** We become weary of everything. No human love is entirely satisfying, for the shadow of separation or of death is over it. Only the one who is the source of living water and not a cracked cistern, can satisfy human thirst. Saint Augustine has expressed it in a celebrated phrase: 'You have created us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.' Our works, of course, count more for God, than do our words; but in some way, our desires are still more important. They mark an available space for God in us, the day he would wish to make us rich. Jesus, and Mary in her Magnificat, declare blessed those who hunger and thirst for God, and unhappy those who are satisfied.

Happy are we if at certain moments of our life, while meditating on the word of God, praying, or responding generously to God's call, we have had an experience of God, through the feelings which manifest him: peace, joy, security, inner conviction, fullness.... Then we can kindle in others the love and thirst for God.

• **64 (63)** It dismays us sometimes that the psalmist, should descend from the warmth of his love for God, to a cold denunciation of his own enemies. We wonder how we can make the whole psalm our own. There is a real problem here which is insoluble unless we realize how God had to deal with a people, who saw the world in black and white, and who did not easily distinguish the sin from the sinner. For the people of today with a little more insight into the influences suffered by the human mind, unqualified condemnation is not possible. Do not judge others or you will be judged yourselves. Consequently, the denun-

PSALM 63 (62)

1S23:14

Longing for God.

²O God, you are my God, it is you I seek; for you, my body longs and my soul thirsts, as a dry and weary land without water.

42:3;
143:6

³Thus have I gazed upon you in the Sanctuary, to see your power and your glory.

⁴Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

⁵I will praise you as long as I live, lift up my hands and call on your name.

145:2;
119:48

⁶As with the richest food, my soul will feast; my mouth will praise you with joyful lips.

36:9

⁷When I remember you on my bed, I think of you all through the night, ⁸for you have been my help; I sing in the shadow of your wings.

17:8

⁹My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

Dt 13:5

¹⁰In vain, they are after my life; they will go down to the depths of the earth;

¹¹they will be delivered to the sword, and become the prey of jackals.

¹²The king will rejoice in God.

21:2

All who swear by God's name will boast:

"At last, slanderers' tongues have been silenced."

PSALM 64 (63)

The defeat of God's enemies.

²Hear, O God, my voice, as I plead; protect my life from the enemy's threat.

³Hide me from the scheming of the wicked; from the designs of the evil-plotters, ⁴who sharpen their tongues like swords, and aim bitter words like arrows, ⁵shooting at the innocent from cover, shooting suddenly without fear.

11:2;
Jer 9:2

⁶They invite each other to evil-doing; they conspire to lay snares, saying, "No one will see us, ⁷who will uncover our scheme?"

Is 29:15

Who peers into man, will uncover them.

⁸And now, God fires his arrows at them; and suddenly, they are struck down. ⁹Their own tongue brought them to ruin; and all who see them shake their heads.

¹⁰Everyone will stand in awe; they proclaim the works of God and ponder on his deeds.

5:12;
32:11

¹¹The upright will rejoice and take refuge in Yahweh; the upright of heart will glory in him.

PSALM 65 (64)

Song of springtime: a psalm of worship.

²Praise belongs to you, O God, in Zion; here people come to fulfill their vows.

³All mortals bring to you their evil deeds, to you, who answer prayers.

78:38

⁴Though our faults prevail over us, you forgive our sins.

⁵Blessed is the one you choose to approach you, and take, to dwell in your courts. In your house we are satisfied with the good things of your holy temple.

⁶With awesome deeds of righteousness, you answer us, O God our savior, hope of all the ends of the earth and of distant islands.

24:2;
119:90

⁷By your power, you set up the mountains.

89:10;
107:29;
Mt 8:26

⁸By your strength the seas were calmed; you lull their roaring waves and the turmoil of the nations.

67:5

⁹Those who dwell at the ends of the earth stand in awe of your marvelous deeds. You make joyful, the dawn, and the coming of dusk.

Hos
2:10;
Jl 2:19;
Ps 46:5

¹⁰You water the land and care for it, enriching it with natural resources. God's stream is filled with water; so you prepare the earth to give us its fruits.

Is 30:23

¹¹You drench the furrows in the land and level the ridges; you soften the soil with showers and bless its crops.

Am 9:13

¹²You crown the year with your goodness; abundance flows everywhere.

ciation must be transposed into another key, even turned against ourselves, or, rather, against everything in ourselves that robs us of that thirst for God which the psalmist feels so acutely.

When life is in danger or we are wounded by sharp words, it is time to pray with this psalm.

• **65 (64)** Learning from the Exodus, Israel knew God as savior. When she changed her way of life from semi-nomadic to that of settled agriculture, the recurrence of sowing and harvest, of early rain and summer ripening, enabled her to see him as a giver of life and creator. The vision was unclouded and immediate; no technicality of modern farming was there to blunt the edge of wonder. For Israel, it was God alone who dressed the flowers. Perhaps, we should try to recapitulate this sense of God, working through the winter to bring new life and new color. This same power raised Christ's body and it will raise our own, working throughout the winter of our lives.

This material abundance makes us think of another kind and for which God assured his friends. The Church also knows about spring rains, the summer harvest and songs of happiness. That should not make us forget that God is at work through seasons and rainfall. If the majority of Christians and Church communities no longer dare to ask God for the weather needed for harvest, that is not a proof that our faith is now more spiritual but that we unfortunately feel at ease with a helpless God.

¹³The deserts have become pasture land,
the hills are clothed with gladness;
¹⁴the meadows, covered with flocks,
the valleys, decked with grain—
they shout and sing for joy.

96:12

PSALM 66 (65)**A people's thanksgiving.**

• **66 (65)** The 'we' of verses 2 to 12 changes abruptly to 'I' in verse 13. If this is not a combination of two independent psalms one must assume that the leader (the king?) is speaking of his people or that some private individual has used a national psalm to introduce his own prayer. On the whole it seems better to suppose two psalms later joined by an editor. Common to both parts is relief and joy. Thus the psalmist invites us to praise God for his many blessings. Surely, most of us at some time or the other would have experienced the working of God's Invisible Hand. Perhaps many of us have special talents and countless blessings to thank Him for. And, if some of us are still waiting for these gifts Jesus has told us in Mathew 6:31 and again in verse 34, "Do not worry..." and then in Mathew 7:11 "How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

The psalmist knows that God has not only created nature but that he protects his people from a hostile world, and he recalls his saving wonders. "We thank you, Lord God, Master of the universe, who are and who were, for you have begun your reign, making use of your invincible power. The nations raged but your wrath has come, the time to judge the dead and reward your servants the prophets, the saints and those who honor your Name—whether great or small—and destroy those who destroy the earth" (Rev 11:17-18).

Let us review our history or the history of the church and we will see how much God has done for us. Thus we will worship, praise him and give thanks.

¹Shout with joy to God, all you on earth;
²sing to the glory of his name;
proclaim his glorious praise.

98:4

29:2

³Say to God, "How great are your deeds!
How formidable your power,
that makes your enemies cower!
⁴All the earth bows down to you,
making music, in praise of you,
singing in honor of your name."

18:45

⁵Come, and see God's wonders;
his deeds, awesome for humans.

46:9

⁶He has turned the sea into dry land,
and the river was crossed on foot.
Let us, therefore, rejoice in him.

14–15;
Jos 3;
Ps 114:
3, 5

⁷He rules by his might forever;
his eyes keeping watch on the peoples;
his arm, holding the rebels in check.

⁸Praise our God, O nations;
let the sound of his praise be heard;

⁹for he has preserved us among the living
and kept our feet from stumbling.

121:3

¹⁰Why did you test us, O God;
and refine us like silver?

26:2;
Zec 13:9

¹¹You let us fall into the snare;
you burdened us with disgrace.

¹²You allowed a nobody to rule over us;
and we have gone through fire and water,
but you have brought us to safety at last.

¹³I will bring offerings to your house
in fulfillment of my vows—

22:26

¹⁴those I made, when assailed with troubles.

¹⁵I will offer holocausts of fatlings,
sending up smoke of burning rams,
and a sacrifice of goats and bulls.

51:21

¹⁶All you, who fear God, come, and listen;
let me tell you what he has done.

9:2

¹⁷I cried aloud to him,
extolling him with my tongue.

Jn 9:31 ¹⁸If I had nurtured wickedness in my heart,
then Yahweh would not have heard.

17:1 ¹⁹But God has listened;
he gave heed to my prayer.

²⁰May God be blessed!
He has not rejected my prayer;
nor withheld his love from me.

PSALM 67 (66)

Harvest song.

Num 6:
24-25 ²May God be gracious and bless us;
may he let his face shine upon us;
Acts
28:28 ³that your way be known on earth
and your salvation, among the nations.

⁴May the peoples praise you, O God;
may all the peoples praise you!

98:9 ⁵May the countries be glad and sing for joy,
for you rule the peoples with justice;
and guide the nations of the world.

⁶May the peoples praise you, O God,
may all the peoples praise you!

85:13 ⁷The land has given its harvest;
God, our God, has blessed us.

⁸May God bless us and be revered,
to the very ends of the earth.

• **67 (66)** The occasion of this happy song is a successful harvest, but the psalmist can rise above selfish considerations. The triumph of a good harvest—or industrial prosperity—should make one think of places, where the harvest fails. God is the same God there, and man no less his image. If God rules the whole world with justice, man must try to imitate him. Ecumenism and economics are sometimes the same thing. The blessing of the psalm takes us to the beginning of the letter to the Ephesians (Eph 1:3). We can pray with this psalm, to give thanks to God for the goods of the earth.

PSALM 68 (67)

The journey of God's people: triumphant hymn of thanks.

Num
10:35 ²Arise, O God, scatter your enemies; let your
foes flee before you.

³As smoke is blown by the wind, so blow
them away; as wax melts before the fire, so let
the wicked perish before you.

32:11 ⁴But let the righteous be glad and exult before God;
let them sing to God and shout for joy.

15:21 ⁵Sing to God, sing praises to his name; open
the way, to him who rides upon the clouds; Yah-
weh is his name. Rejoice in his presence.

146:9;
22:21-
22 ⁶Father of orphans and protector of widows—
such is our God in his holy dwelling.

• **68 (67)** This is the most picturesque—and obscure—of all the psalms. In the liturgy, it particularly celebrates the Ascension of Christ. And no wonder: it is a hymn fit for the climax victory of God, fighting for his people and there is a wild joy, running through it. God rides on the clouds but marches across the desert too. He feeds his starving people. He takes willing captives with him to his holy place on the hill; his might is in the skies. In the same way, the Son of Man whose chariot was a cloud (Dn

7:13, cf. Mt 26:64) went on foot through the wilderness and fed his people there (Jn 6). When he ascended, he took a host of 'captives' with him (Eph 4:8), and his power is felt from heaven, where he is seated at the Father's right hand.

This psalm is adequate to celebrate our liberation, as we journey toward the Promised Land.

⁷He gives shelter to the homeless, sets the prisoners free; but keeps the rebels in their jail.

⁸O God, when you went forth, when you led your people through the desert, ⁹the earth trembled; the heavens poured down rain, at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

Hb 3:3-6;
Heb
12:26;
Dt 33:2;
Jdg 5:5

¹⁰Then you gave a rain of blessings, to comfort your weary children.

¹¹Your people found a dwelling, and, in your mercy, O God, you provided for the needy.

¹²The Lord has dispatched messengers: "The Lord has shattered an army!" ¹³The kings and their armies flee, yes, they flee; they flee!

48:5-6

¹⁴A woman at home divides the spoils: wings of dove covered with silver, their pinions with shining gold.

¹⁵When the Almighty routed the kings, snow fell on the Dark Mountain.

Job 38:
22-23

¹⁶O mighty mountain of Bashan, high and rugged mountain, ¹⁷why look with envy upon the mountain where God chooses to reign, where Yahweh will dwell forever?

Am 4:1
78:68

¹⁸With myriads of powerful chariots, God came from Sinai into his Sanctuary.

Jos 5:
13-15

¹⁹You ascend on high, you have taken many captives. You receive tribute from people, including sinful rebels. Indeed Yahweh lives there!

Eph 4:8

²⁰Blessed be the Lord, God, our savior, who daily bears our burdens!

²¹Ours is a God who saves; our Yahweh lets us escape from death.

²²But he crushes the heads of his enemies, the hairy crowns of the criminals.

Jdg 5:2

²³The Lord said, "I will bring them back from Bashan, back from the depths of the sea; ²⁴that you may bathe your feet in blood; and the tongues of your dogs may have their share of your foes."

2K 9:36

²⁵I remember the procession of the King, of my God, as they came into the Sanctuary: ²⁶the singers in front, the musicians last, between them, maidens playing tambourines.

²⁷Praise God in the great congregation, praise the Lord in the feasts of Israel.

²⁸There, in the lead is the least of them, the tribe of Benjamin; the princes of Judah in a body; the princes of Naphtali, and of Zebulon.

²⁹Summon your power, O God, with the strength you have wielded for us.

³⁰To your temple in Jerusalem, kings will come with gifts.

³¹Rebuke the beasts that dwell in the reeds, and the herd of bulls. Humble them; let them bring gold and silver. Scatter the nations who delight in war.

³²Let wealth come from Egypt; let Ethiopia extend its hands to God.

³³Sing to God, O kingdoms of the world; sing praises to the Lord, ³⁴to him who rides the ancient heavens, and speaks in the voice of thunder.

³⁵Proclaim the might of God; he is great in Israel, powerful in heavens.

³⁶Awesome in his Sanctuary is the God of Israel. He gives his people power and strength. Blessed be God!

PSALM 69 (68)

Cry from the depths of sorrow.

²Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

³I am sunk in the miry depths, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, swept and engulfed by the flood.

⁴I am weary from calling for help; my throat is hoarse and parched. My eyes have grown dim looking for my God.

⁵More than the hairs of my head are those who hate me for no reason; mighty are those who attack me, many are my enemies without cause. What I did not steal I am forced to restore.

⁶Had I done wrong, O God, you would know it; my faults would not be hidden from you.

⁷Let me not bring disgrace to those who hope in you, O Yahweh God of hosts; may I cause no dishonor to those who seek you, O God of Israel

⁸—since I am held in contempt for your sake, and shame has covered my face.

⁹I have become a stranger to my kindred, an alien to my mother's sons.

¹⁰Zeal for your house consumes me, as fire, and those who insult you, insult me as well.

¹¹When I humbled myself with fasting, I was scorned for it.

¹²When I put on sackcloth, I was made a laughingstock.

• **69 (68)** There is an abrupt descent, from the joy of the previous psalm to the depths of misery. Whoever put these two psalms side by side, had a strong sense of contrast. Perhaps, he thought that ecstatic joy can go on too long and must have its corrective. For the Hebrew, this must be surprising enough; for the Christian, it is very pointed indeed. In Psalm 68, the psalmist sees the triumph of Christ; in Psalm 69, he sees the struggle that came, that had to come before it: It was necessary that the Christ should suffer, and in this way enter his glory. We cannot put all these words on the lips of Jesus: there was no 'sinful folly' (v. 6) in him, and he would never have uttered the curses of verses 23 to 29—instead he cried 'Father, forgive them.' But the evangelist John invites us, to think of Jesus, as we recite this psalm (Jn 2:17; cf. also Mt 27:34) and we would be wise to take his hint.

With the sorrows of our brothers and sisters, we may reconstruct the face of the broken Christ. United to them, we can pray: 'Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck' (v. 2).

In distress the psalmist calls

out to God to save him. This fervent call and his faith and trust in God will indeed save him. However, his appeal to God to punish those who have wronged him is contrary to the teachings of Jesus who has told us in Mathew 5:44, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." So, if we follow the teachings of Christ we will not reach such depths of desperation, on the contrary we will rise with Him in eternal salvation.

¹³I have become the talk of those who sit at the gates, the topic of the drunkards' songs.

¹⁴But I pray to you, O Yahweh. At a time most favorable to you, in your great love, O God, answer me, with your unfailing help.

¹⁵Rescue me, lest I sink in the mire; deliver me from the storm and the deep waters.

¹⁶Let not the flood engulf me, nor the deep suck me in, let not the pit close its mouth upon me.

¹⁷In your mercy, O Yahweh, give me a good answer; in your great compassion, turn to me. 109:21

¹⁸Hide not your face from your servant; answer me at once, for I am in distress. 102:3; 143:7

¹⁹Come and rescue me; set me free from my enemies.

²⁰You know the disgrace I suffer, and you know my oppressors and my humiliations.

²¹Dishonor has driven me to despair; I looked for sympathy, and there was none, for comforters, and there was no one. Mt 26:40

²²They gave me poison for food, and vinegar to drink. Mt 27:34

²³May snares be set for them in their banquets, and traps, in their sacred feasts. Rom 11: 9-10

²⁴May their eyes grow dim, so that they will not see; may their loins be stricken with palsy.

²⁵Pour out your fury upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them.

²⁶Make their camp desolate; may no one dwell in their tents, Acts 1:20

²⁷for they persecute the one you have wounded, and increased the pain of the one you have struck.

²⁸Charge them, with crime upon crime; and do not acquit them.

²⁹Blot them out of the book of life, and do not enroll them among the upright. 32 32; Dn 12:1; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5

³⁰But I myself, am humbled and wounded; your salvation, O God, will lift me up.

³¹I will praise the name of God in song; I will glorify him with thanksgiving.

³²This will please Yahweh more than an ox, or a bull with horns and divided hoofs.

³³Let the lowly witness this, and be glad. You who seek God, may your hearts be revived. 22:27; 34:3

³⁴For Yahweh hears the needy; and does not despise those in captivity.

³⁵Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and whatever moves in them.

102:17;
Is 44:26 ³⁶For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah. His people shall dwell in the land and possess it;

Is 65:9;
Ps 5:12 ³⁷the children of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name will dwell in it.

PSALM 70 (69)

Prayer for trust and appeal.

40:14-
18 ²Be pleased, O God, to rescue me! Make haste to help me!

³Let those who seek my life be put to shame and disgrace. Let those who want me destroyed be turned back in confusion.

⁴Let those who say, "Aha, Aha!" to me, feel consternation.

⁵May all who seek you be glad, and rejoice in you. May all who love your saving power, say evermore, "Great is Yahweh!"

⁶But I am afflicted and needy; come to me quickly, O God, my help and my Savior. O God, do not delay!

PSALM 71 (70)

Prayer in old age.

31:2-4 ¹In you, O Yahweh, I seek refuge; let me not be disgraced.

²In your justice help me and deliver me; turn your ear to me and save me!

³Be my rock of refuge; a stronghold, to give me safety; for you are my rock and my fortress.

⁴Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of cruel and violent people.

⁵For you, O Yahweh, have been my hope; my trust, O God, from my youth.

⁶I have relied on you from birth: from my mother's womb you brought me forth. My praise is of you continually.

⁷I have become like a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge.

⁸My mouth is filled with your praise, announcing your glory, day by day.

• **70 (69)** Notice that this psalm is an almost word-for-word repetition of Psalm 40:14-18. Yahweh is the 'proper name' of God which distinguishes him from the gods (elohim) of the nations that he has conquered easily, whether they were the gods of Egypt or the gods of Babylon. The Exodus and the return from Babylon have proven this. Christians still use the same name: Jesus (Yehoshua) means 'Yahweh is Savior.' He is the Lord we are bidden to acknowledge (1 Jn 4:15).

When we wish to pray for ourselves or for others, we can turn to this psalm.

Whatever be our need and affliction, the Gospels very clearly tell us that Jesus is the answer!

• **71 (70)** An old man looks back on his life. He was taught at his mother's knee to put his trust in God always. He has not forgotten (vv. 6 and 17) but has God forgotten him? His enemies say 'yes'; he knows better. And yet he is anxious. Even a short life has its crisis and he has lived a long time, and God seems very far away. Though the psalmist expresses himself in the conventional language, this does not conceal his very real distress. We can imagine here the situation of Job himself. One learns with age how powerfully the resilience of youth contributed even to religious optimism. God, slowly and gently, teaches us to do without it. This unconscious young confidence in ourselves having done its work is now removed. If old age wishes it, God is closer than ever: the trust is purified.

Like the psalmist we too may have gone through the ups and downs of life and at times even feeling like Job. But the faith of the psalmist never wavered. He is confident that God will raise him up from the deepest depths. If we also show faith like that of the psalmist, we will have nothing and nobody to fear. And then, like St. Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:20 and again in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, we too will, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks to God at every moment. This is the will of God, your vocation as Christians."

⁹Do not cast me off in my old age, do not desert me when my strength fails.

¹⁰For my enemies speak ill of me; awaiting my death, they set plans.

¹¹They say, "God has forsaken him; let us pursue and seize him, for no one will rescue him."

¹²O God, be not far from me; my God, make haste to help me!

¹³Let my accusers be destroyed in shame; let those who seek my ruin, be covered with disgrace and scorn.

¹⁴Then, I may trust in you and praise you.

¹⁵My lips will proclaim your intervention and tell of your salvation all day, little though it is what I can understand.

¹⁶I will come to your strength, O Yahweh, and announce your justice, yours alone.

¹⁷You have taught me from my youth and, until now, I proclaim your marvels.

¹⁸When I grow old and gray, do not leave me, O God; give me time to declare your might, your power to all generations to come.

¹⁹Your justice, O God, reaches to heaven; you have done great things. Who is like you, O God?

²⁰Many have been my hardships and misery, but once more you come to revive me; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again.

²¹You will restore me and comfort me again.

²²I will praise you with the harp, for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing your praise with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel.

²³My lips will rejoice, and my soul, too, which you have rescued.

²⁴I will recall your intervention the whole day long, "Yes, those who sought to do me harm have been confused and put to shame."

22:12;
38:23;
40:14;
70:2

40:15;
35:4

PSALM 72 (71)

The kingdom of peace.

• **72 (71)** Is this a picture of the future ideal king, or an idealistic picture of the reigning king? In any case it outlines the king-Messiah as Israel would hope him to be: after all, every new Davidic King must have seen a potential Messiah. The courtly compliments—if this is what they

¹God, endow the king with your justice, the royal son with your righteousness.

²May he rule your people justly and defend the rights of the lowly.

³Let the mountains bring peace to the people, and the hills, justice.

89:15

⁴He will defend the cause of the poor,
deliver the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor.

⁵He will endure, as the sun
and as the moon, through all generations.

37:11 ⁶He will be like rain falling on the fields,
or showers watering the earth.

⁷Justice will flower in his days,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more.

Zac9:10; Sir 44:21; Jos 1:4 ⁸For he reigns from sea to sea,
from the River to the ends of the earth;

⁹his foes are crushed before him,
and his enemies lick the dust.

1K 10:1 ¹⁰The kings of Tarshish and the islands
render him tribute,
the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts,
¹¹all kings bow down to him,
and all nations serve him.

Job 29:12 ¹²He delivers the needy who call on him,
the afflicted, with no one to help them.

¹³His mercy is upon the weak and the poor;
he saves the lives of the poor.

¹⁴He rescues them from oppression and strife,
for their life is precious to him.

Mt 2:11 ¹⁵May he live long,
may gold from Sheba be given him.
May people always pray for him,
and blessings be invoked for him all day.

¹⁶May grain abound throughout the land,
waving and rustling, as in Lebanon;
may cities teem with people, as fields with grass.

¹⁷May his name endure forever;
may his name be as lasting as the sun.
All the races will boast about him;
and he will be praised by all nations.

¹⁸*Praised be Yahweh, God of Israel,
who alone, works so marvelously.*

¹⁹*Praised be his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen. Amen.*

²⁰*This concludes the prayers
of David, son of Jesse.*

are—are quite deliberately extravagant: the whole of the inhabited earth, the soil itself, pays him homage. But not unwillingly! The king buckles on no sword as he does in Psalm 45: there is no weapon mentioned, except the weapons of integrity (v. 7) and sympathy (vv. 12 to 14). Surely this psalm prepares God's people for a king who would tell his followers to put the sword back in the scabbard.

The ideal kingdom will never be a reality here below. The risen Lord will inaugurate it at the end of time. Faith, however, lets us discover the signs of the coming of the kingdom. Humanity goes forward toward its unification. The desire for justice and peace for all, grows stronger in every nation. The King of Peace brings good news to the poor (Lk 4:18). He defends the rights of the lowly. He proclaims a new age when God will reconcile humanity. The weak have the right to live, and there is food for all. Our world is far from the realization of the universal charter of human rights. It is not for us to wait passively for this reign. God is so thoughtful toward humanity, created in his image, that He wishes humans to be associated with all his works, including the realization of the eternal city. This will be, evidently, a gift of God, but not a simple gift as was the apparition of the universe. It will be the crowning of what humans have begun to do on earth.

PSALM 73 (72)**The problem of innocent suffering.**

• **73 (72)** We are not used to bitter words in the psalms, but we have them here. All the more remarkable is the reaction at the end, than which there is no higher mystical attitude in the Psalter. Indeed, we may have here a confidence in a future life with God beyond the grave. If so, revelation has taken a great leap and the problem of suffering is solved—or nearly solved. One thing is certain: the psalmist has supreme confidence in God, yet he seems quite prepared to see the wicked prosper and himself suffer as long as this life lasts. If the conclusion is not explicitly drawn, it is there implicitly. This psalm will always be relevant: the human situation described here is familiar to us all; so is the temptation, so is the necessary faith.

Why are the wicked successful? It is more a scandal than a temptation, when the believer sees the wicked succeed in everything: the violent, the unscrupulous, those who have money and can corrupt, masters of deceit. “Wait for the end,” says the psalmist. “Why have I been honest?” asks the father of a family, who finds it difficult to live and feels insulted by the luxury of the dishonest rich.

“Yet I am always with you” (v. 23). At this point, the psalm comes to what is essential. It is not enough to say that the dishonest rich will have to pay and it is not always true. The experience of the presence of God here, below, compensates for whatever trials there are, and the psalmist, even if he dares not affirm that there is another life, is convinced that God, for his part, will not abandon him to death.

In a consumer society such as ours a psalm of this kind is very appropriate. Those who pray with it can ask themselves: where is my happiness?

¹ Surely God is good to Israel,
I mean, to the clean of heart.

² But, as for me, I almost stumbled;
I nearly lost my foothold,

³ for I was envious of the arrogant,
when I saw the wicked prosper.

37:1

⁴ For they suffer no pain;
they are strong and sound of body,
⁵ free from troubles common to mortals;
they are not stricken by human ills.

⁶ That is why pride becomes their necklace,
and violence, the robe that covers them.

⁷ Evil comes from their callous hearts,
boundless evil, from their corrupt minds.

Job
15:27

⁸ They scoff and speak with malice,
and they threaten arrogantly.

⁹ Their mouths defy the heavens
and their tongues dictate on earth.

¹⁰ People, therefore, look up to them,
because they are well-watered.

¹¹ “Does God see?” they say.

10:11

“Has the Most High some knowledge of this?”

¹² Such are the wicked—always carefree,
while they rake in riches.

¹³ In vain, have I kept my heart clean
and washed my hands in innocence,

26:6

¹⁴ if all day long I am stricken,
and punished every morning.”

¹⁵ Had I spoken like this,
I would not be acting as one of your children.

¹⁶ Although I tried to understand this,
it was difficult for me,

¹⁷ until I entered the secrets of God.

119:130

Then I perceived their approaching doom.

¹⁸ You place them on slippery ground
and make them fall into the pit.

¹⁹ How suddenly they are destroyed,
completely swept away in terror!

²⁰ As one awakes from a nightmare,
so, when you arise, O Yahweh,
you shake them off, like a dream.

²¹ When my heart was embittered,

and my spirit distraught
²²it was folly, not wisdom;
 I did not know you better than the beasts.

²³Yet, I am always with you;
 you hold my right hand;
²⁴you guide me on the way you chose;
 and your glory brings me along.

²⁵I have no one in heaven but you;
 on earth, I desire nothing but you.

²⁶My flesh and my heart waste away
 for you, O God; O my rock,
 you are mine forever.

²⁷Those who abandon you will perish;
 you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
²⁸But as for me, my joy is to be near God;
 I have made the Lord my refuge;
 and I will proclaim all his works.

PSALM 74 (73)

God's people mourn over the ruined temple: a national lament.

^{23:1} ¹O God, have you rejected us forever? Why
 vent your anger on the sheep of your own fold?

^{Dt 32:9} ²Remember the people you have formed of
 old, the tribe you have redeemed as your inheritance.
 Remember Mount Zion, where you once lived.

³Climb, and visit these hopeless ruins, the enemy
 has ravaged everything in the Sanctuary.

⁴Your foes have roared triumphantly in the
 holy place, and set up their banner of victory.

⁵Like lumbermen felling trees, ⁶they smashed
 the carved paneling with hatchets, hammers and axes.

^{2K 25:9;} ^{Is 64:10} ⁷They defiled your Sanctuary and set aflame
 the dwelling place of your name.

⁸They said in fury, "Let us destroy them all."
 They razed to the ground all the shrines of God
 in the land.

^{77:9;} ^{Lm 2:9} ⁹With no signs and no prophets, no one can
 tell how long this will last.

¹⁰How long, O God, will the foe blaspheme?
 How long will the enemy revile your name?

¹¹Why do you hold back your right hand? Why
 keep your hand hidden?

• **74 (73)** The problem of evil comes up from the nation's point of view. There is no hint that the nation deserved its punishment. What is at stake, therefore, is the reputation of God himself. At least, this is how the psalmist unwittingly puts it.

The occasion of this lament could be the first truly religious persecution in history—under Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C.—but on the whole the arguments favor the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586. But naturally it is the ruin of the Temple that the psalmist describes: it should move God to action if his own house has been attacked. The psalm is unhappily all too opposing at the present day: we pray for the Church of Silence.

But salvation is at hand. The tears of Jesus over Jerusalem (cf. Lk 19:41-44) link this elegy to his death, even though he had said that there wouldn't be a stone left unturned from the Temple (cf. Mt 24:2). The destroyed Temple was rebuilt on the third day (cf. Mt 26:61; Acts 6:14). Now, it is greater and more perfect than

the old Temple, since it has been raised by God (Heb 9:12). Jesus might cry for humanity today. The weapons of destruction are no longer the ax and the hammer, but could be, for instance, some present economic systems. All of humanity is called to enter into the new Temple. Why not pray with this psalm?

¹²Are you not, O God, my king, since birth; you, who bring salvation to the land?

¹³You split the sea in two by your power; you broke the monsters' heads in the water; ¹⁴you crushed the heads of Leviathan and fed him to the dolphins.

¹⁵You opened up rivers and springs and dried up ever-flowing streams.

17:1-7;
Num 20
2-13;
Jos 3

¹⁶You own the day as well as the night; you have set the course of the sun and the light.

¹⁷You fixed the earth's borders; you created summer and winter.

¹⁸Remember, O Yahweh, how the lawless scoff at your name, a party of fools cast you off.

¹⁹Do not betray your turtledove to the beast, do not forget forever, the life of your poor.

²⁰See how they keep your Covenant, in the dark caves of the land.

²¹Do not let the oppressed be put to shame; may the poor and needy praise your name.

²²Arise, O God, and defend your cause; see how the thoughtless laugh at you all day long.

²³Do not forget the clamor of your foes, the continuous uproar of your enemies.

PSALM 75 (74)

Judge of the world.

• **75 (74)** The basic attitude of man toward God is evidently humility. It appears here as the one criterion of judgment. But it is a miracle to think that any passage of Scripture exhausts its topic. The tableau of judgment in Matthew 25 makes active charity the test. Yet, even here, the element of humility comes in, because charity is exercised for the 'least' of Christ's brothers and sisters. In short, it seems that all who ask for mercy can escape judgment. Perhaps this is why the Pharisees and not the harlots are attacked in the Gospels.

Praying with this psalm, we can be the legitimate heirs of the prophets, in the face of the arrogance of the soothsayers, in a world built on power and oppression.

²We give you thanks, O God, we give thanks. Those who invoke your name will recount your wonderful deeds.

³"At a set time I will judge fairly. ⁴The earth wobbles with its inhabitants, but I will restore its foundations.

⁵To the proud I say, 'Boast no more.' And to the wicked, 'Raise not your head. ⁶Do not lift yourself so high; do not insult God."

⁷God comes, though not from the east or the west, nor from the mountains or desert;

⁸God comes to judge, putting one down and lifting up another.

⁹In the hand of Yahweh is a cup of spiced and foaming wine; he pours it out for the wicked to drain to the dregs.

11:6;
Rev
14:10

¹⁰As for me, I will rejoice forever and sing praises to the God of Jacob.

¹¹He will break the power of the wicked, but the power of the virtuous will be exalted.

PSALM 76 (75)**Song after victory.**

²God is now famous in Judah,
in Israel his name is great.

Gen 14:18; 2S 6
³Salem is indeed his tent;
he has made Zion his dwelling place.

48:4-8
⁴There, he broke the flashing arrow,
the shield and sword, the spear and bow.

⁵You are glorious and majestic,
enthroned on everlasting mountains.

⁶The stouthearted lie despoiled,
sleeping their last sleep,
not one able to lift a hand.

⁷At your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
both rider and horse lay stunned.

⁸But you—how terrible you are!
Who can oppose the fury of your onslaught?

⁹You thundered judgment from the heavens;
while the earth trembled and lay still,

¹⁰as you, O God, arose to judge,
to save all the humble of the earth.

¹¹Pagan nations will bring you praise;
their survivors will celebrate your name.

¹²Make vows to Yahweh, your God,
and fulfill them; let the people
bring offerings to the Fearsome One,
¹³who breaks the spirit of rulers,
and is formidable to the kings of the earth.

PSALM 77 (76)**God's dealing with Israel: prayer of a perplexed man.**

²I cry aloud to God—aloud that he may hear me.

Is 26:16; Ps 50:15; 88:2
³In the day of trouble I seek the Lord; and
stretch out my hand untiringly, my soul refusing
to be consoled.

42:6, 12; 43:5
⁴When I think of God I sigh; when I meditate,
my spirit fails.

143:5
⁵You keep my eyes watchful; I am so troubled
I cannot speak; ⁶I remember the days of old. I
consider the years of long ago; ⁷and the whole
night, my soul remains disturbed, my spirit won-
ders,

⁸“Will Yahweh keep silent forever? Will he
never show his favor again?”

• **76 (75)** The immense power of God is wielded with infinite delicacy. It speeds down to crush everything that opposes its strength but leaves those who know their own weakness quite untouched. For these, the divine omnipotence is not a terrifying thing because it fights on their side; their weakness is God's opportunity to show his strength. 'My great strength is revealed in weakness' (2 Cor 12:9). God never displays his power to impress but always to rescue. The incarnate Word used his power for the sick and the hungry only because he was sorry for them. He walked on the lake only to rejoin and calm his frightened disciples. If the psalmist delights in God the Warrior, we can hardly blame him: it is only a child boasting of his Father's strength.

God has defeated the kings who were attacking Jerusalem, the Holy City. This victory prefigures another, when in the end, the humble will be liberated.

• **77 (76)** One feels that the psalmist is distressed by the plight of his people. He recalls the great days when the nation was brought to birth, through God's mercy and his power. He wonders what can have happened to this child who seemed so promising. He ends up on a pathetic, nostalgic note. Again, it is the problem of evil on a national scale. The right hand of God once outstretched, now, seems to have been withdrawn. There is no answer offered. The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, and that is all. This is so often the case, with nations

and with individuals. Blessed is the name of the Lord for what he gave, even though he has taken it away.

The Passover is the "passing of the Lord." We look toward the past and remember Jesus Christ, 'risen from the dead' (2 Tim 2:8); afterwards, we announce the overpowering strength of the resurrection (cf. Col 3:1-2). It is a psalm for remembrance in times of affliction.

We tend to see the past as more wonderful than it actually was. The passage of time will let us see that God is just as present and active in our own day.

⁹Has he locked his love and ended his promise for all time?

¹⁰Is God forgetting his mercy? Has he, in anger, withheld his compassion?"

¹¹This is what makes me distraught—that the Most High no longer acts as before.

¹²I remember the deeds of Yahweh; I recall his marvels of old.

¹³I meditate on all your work, and consider your mighty deeds.

¹⁴Your way, O God, is most holy. Is there any god greater than you, our God?

¹⁵You alone, are the God who works wonders, who has made known his power to the nations.

¹⁶With power, you have redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

¹⁷When the waters saw you, O God, they were afraid; the depths of the sea trembled.

¹⁸The clouds poured down rain; the skies resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed from every side.

¹⁹Your thunder crashed in the midst of the whirlwind; your lightning lit up the world; the earth shook and trembled.

19:16;
Ps 97:4

²⁰Your path led through the sea, your way through the great water; but your footprints were nowhere to be seen.

²¹You led your people, as a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

PSALM 78 (77)

God's patience and man's ingratitude.

• **78 (77)** The lesson of past history beats the rhythm of Israel's history. Divine generosity, human ingratitude, correction, renewed generosity, is an enlarged picture of the individual experience. God rarely showed his hands in such a way that people are forced to recognize it, in the events of history. This needs a thoughtful and grateful heart. And even then, we easily forget. In the past, God's people have found themselves threatened first by the sea, then by the desert. Flood and drought, too much and too little, luxury and penury, have always been the enemies of the people of God: 'Give me neither poverty

¹Give heed, O my people, to my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth!

Dt 32:1

²I will speak in parables; I will talk of old mysteries, ³which we have heard and known, which our ancestors have told us.

49:5;
Mt 13:35
44:2

⁴We will not keep them hidden from our children; we will announce them to the coming generation: the glorious deeds of Yahweh, his might and the wonders he has done.

Dt 4:9;
6:20-25

⁵He issued decrees for Jacob, and set up a law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children,

⁶so the next generation would learn, and teach their own children.

⁷They would then, put their trust in God, and not forget his deeds and his commands.

⁸And not be like their ancestors, stubborn and rebellious people, a people of inconstant heart, whose spirit was fickle.

⁹Well-armed with bow, the Ephraimites took flight when the time came to do battle.

¹⁰They did not keep God's Covenant. They refused to follow his law.

¹¹They forgot the marvels he had done, ¹²what their ancestors had seen in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan.

14 ¹³He divided the sea and led them across; he made the water stand like a wall.

105:39; 13:21 ¹⁴By day, he led them with a cloud, and by night, with a fiery light.

Num 20: 2-13; 17:1-7 ¹⁵In the desert he split rocks to give them abundant drink.

114:8 ¹⁶He made streams come out of a rock and caused water to flow like a river.

95:8-9; 16; Dt 6:16 ¹⁷Yet, they sinned even more against him, and rebelled against the Most High in the desert. ¹⁸They tested God, demanding the food they craved.

¹⁹They blasphemed against God, saying: "Can God spread a table in the desert?"

²⁰He made water flow out of the rock; can he also give his people bread or meat?"

²¹When Yahweh heard this, he was enraged; a fire raged against Jacob, his anger flared against Israel; ²²for they had no faith in God, nor trust in his deliverance.

Jn 6:31 ²³Yet, he commanded the skies above, and opened the doors of heaven; ²⁴he rained down manna upon them, and fed them with the heavenly grain.

1Cor 10:3 ²⁵They ate and had more than their fill of the bread of angels.

Num 11:31 ²⁶Then, from heaven he stirred the east wind, and, by his power, let loose the south wind, ²⁷to rain down meat on them like dust.

Birds as thick as the sand on the seashore ²⁸fell inside their camp, lying all around their tents.

²⁹They ate till they were satisfied, for he had given them what they craved.

³⁰But even before they were finished, while the food was still in their mouths,

nor riches: give me only the food I need' is the sober prayer of the Book of Proverbs. But when God rescues from the two extremes, there are still the dangers of mediocrity. We can soon forget the urgent prayers in past crisis and the way God heard them. But every day must be seen as a crisis in which God intervenes: 'Give us this day our daily bread!'

Sin is not the end of history; grace is! Verse 2 is quoted in Matthew 13:35. For a Christian, rereading of the psalm, 1 Corinthians 10-11 can help us. Our history is a school of life and prayer. It is enough to remember what we have done and what God does. This psalm can help us.

³¹ God's anger rose against them; he slew the strongest among them and laid low the flower of Israel.

³² In spite of all this, they kept on sinning and did not believe,

³³ so he swept away their days suddenly, as a storm, and their years, in terror. ³⁴ When he slew them, they repented and sought him earnestly.

³⁵ They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High, their redeemer.

³⁶ But they flattered him with their mouths; they lied to him with their tongues, ³⁷ while their hearts were unfaithful; they were untrue to his Covenant.

³⁸ Even then, in his compassion, he forgave their offenses and did not destroy them.

Many a time he restrained his anger, and did not fully stir up his wrath.

³⁹ He remembered that they were but flesh, a breeze that passes and never returns.

⁴⁰ How often did they rebel against him in the wilderness, how often did they grieve him in the desert!

⁴¹ Again and again, they tested him, and provoked the Holy One of Israel.

⁴² They did not remember his power in redeeming them from the oppressor; ⁴³ neither his marvels shown in Egypt; nor his wonders in the fields of Zoan, ⁴⁴ when he turned the rivers to blood, and the oppressors had nothing to drink.

⁴⁵ He sent swarms of flies that devoured them, frogs that devastated them.

⁴⁶ He gave their crops to the caterpillar and their produce to the locust.

⁴⁷ He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamores with frost.

⁴⁸ He struck their herds with plague and their flocks with thunderbolts.

⁴⁹ He unleashed his fury against them, his wrath, indignation and strife—a band of destroying angels.

⁵⁰ Giving vent to his anger, he did not spare them from death, but gave them over to the plague.

⁵¹ He struck down Egypt's firstborn, manhood's first fruits in the tents of Ham.

⁵² Then he led forth his people, like a flock, and guided them, like sheep through the desert.

⁵³ He led them safely, they did not fear; but the sea engulfed their enemies.

⁵⁴He brought them to his holy land, to the mountain his right hand had won.

Jos 23:4 ⁵⁵He drove out peoples before them and gave them the land as their inheritance; they pitched their tents in it.

⁵⁶But they challenged and rebelled against God the Most High, and disobeyed his decrees.

⁵⁷They were unfaithful, like their ancestors, deceitful and crooked, as a twisted bow.

⁵⁸They angered him with their high places; they aroused his jealousy with their idols.

⁵⁹Filled with wrath, God rejected Israel.

1S 4: 10-11 ⁶⁰He abandoned his dwelling at Shiloh, the tent where he dwelt among humans.

⁶¹He led his glory into captivity, his Ark, into the hand of the enemy.

⁶²He gave his people over to the sword, so furious was he at his inheritance.

⁶³Fire devoured their young men; their maidens were deprived of wedding songs.

⁶⁴As their priests fell by the sword, no lament was heard from their widows.

⁶⁵Then, the Lord awoke, shouting, as from sleep induced by wine; ⁶⁶he struck his enemies on their back and put them to everlasting shame.

87:2 ⁶⁷He rejected the house of Joseph, and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim; ⁶⁸but the tribe of Judah and Zion, his beloved mountain.

⁶⁹He built his Sanctuary like heaven, like the earth he founded forever.

1S 13:14; 16:11-13 ⁷⁰He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; ⁷¹from tending the sheep and their young, he brought him to shepherd Jacob, the people of Israel, his inheritance.

⁷²And with upright heart, David pastured them; with skillful hands he led them.

PSALM 79 (78)

National lament over the destruction of Jerusalem.

74; 2K 25:9 ¹O God, the pagans have invaded your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple and reduced Jerusalem to rubble.

Jer 19:7; 1Mac 7:17 ²They have given your servants' corpses to the birds, and the flesh of your saints, to the beasts of the earth.

³They have poured out the blood of your faith-

• **79 (78)** This psalm almost certainly refers to the fall of Jerusalem in the year 586 B.C. There is a confession of guilt—the guilt of an earlier generation. It is interesting that this ingredient should enter the solution of the problem of suffering: Has this man sinned—or his parents?

And, indeed, we may blame our ancestors, for some of our condition, so long as we realize that we may, and do, contribute to the unhappiness of our children. We are the context into which they will be born, for better or for worse. But the psalmist evidently does not will to call God's attention to the sins of his own generation except in passing (v. 9). There is a further devout ingenuity about him when (v. 10) he reminds God of what people will say if he deserts his people. As if God cared! But such a prayer is very human and no doubt raises a smile in heaven.

As long as there are captives and blood is poured in this our land, whenever we live under the weight of guilt, it is a good time to pray with this psalm.

ful, like water around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them.

⁴Mocked and reviled by those around us, we are scorned by our neighbors. 44:14

⁵How long will this last, O Yahweh? Will you be angry forever? Will your wrath always burn to avenge your rights? 89:47

⁶Pour out your anger on the nations that do not acknowledge you; on the kingdoms that do not call on your name. Jer 10:25; 1Thes 4:5

⁷For they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his homeland.

⁸Do not remember against us the sins of our fathers.

Let your compassion hurry to us, for we have been brought very low.

⁹Help us, God, our savior, for the glory of your name; forgive us, for the sake of your name.

¹⁰Give not the nations a chance to say, "Where is their God?" Before our eyes, let them know that you avenge the blood of your servants. 42:4; J1 2:17

¹¹Listen to the groans of the prisoners; by the strength of your arm, deliver those doomed to die.

¹²Return our neighbors sevenfold, O Yahweh, the taunts with which they have taunted you.

¹³Then we, your people, the flock of your pasture, will thank you forever. We will recount your praise from generation to generation. 100:3

PSALM 80 (79)

Plea for the return of God's favor.

• **80 (79)** The theme is much the same as in the preceding psalm but the scene shifts to the northern kingdom, where the axe fell first. Samaria was overrun in the year 721 B.C. and colonized with a mixed population of idolatrous immigrants: so many weeds in the garden of God. What has he done in his vineyard? Understandably enough, there is no mention of the wild grapes this chosen vine had produced (Is 5:1-7). The psalmist dares to ask 'why'? The prophet Amos could provide the answer: thirty years before this time, he had scourged the luxury and oppression of the ruling

²Listen, O shepherd of Israel, you, who lead Joseph like a flock; you, who sit enthroned between the cherubim. 18:11; 1S 4:4

³Shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might and come to save us.

⁴Restore us, O God of hosts; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.

⁵O Yahweh of hosts, how long will your anger burn against the prayers of your people?

⁶You have fed them with the bread of woe, and have given them tears to drink in their sorrow.

⁷You have made us the scorn of our neighbors and the laughingstock of our oppressors. Lk 23:35

⁸Restore us, O God of hosts; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.

Is 5:1

⁹You had a vine you brought from Egypt. You drove nations out, to plant it in their land.

¹⁰On the ground that you cleared, it took root, and filled the land.

¹¹Its shade covered the mountains, its shoots went through the mighty cedars,

72:8

¹²its branches reached out to the sea and its shoots to the River.

Jer 12:7-13

¹³Why, then, have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass by pluck its fruits?

¹⁴The beasts of the forest ravage it and all creatures of the field feed on it.

¹⁵Turn again, O Yahweh of hosts, look down from heaven and see; care for this vine, ¹⁶and protect the stock your hand has planted.

¹⁷Let those who burned it down perish at your rebuke.

¹⁸But lay your hand on your instrument, on the son of man, whom you make strong for yourself.

¹⁹Then, we will never turn away from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.

²⁰Restore us, O Yahweh, God of hosts; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

PSALM 81 (80)

Festal song in harvest time.

²Sing joyfully to God, our strength; acclaim aloud the God of Jacob.

³Start the music, strike the timbrel, play melodies on the harp and lyre.

⁴Sound the trumpet at the new moon, on our feast day, when the moon is full.

23:14

⁵This is a decree for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob,

⁶a statute he wrote for Joseph when he went out of Egypt.

They heard a voice they did not know:

“Open wide your mouth and I will fill it,

⁷I relieved your shoulder from burden; I freed your hands.

95 8; 17; Num 20

⁸You called in distress, and I saved you; unseen, I answered you in thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah.

classes (Am 6:4-7). But we have to sympathize with the psalmist. He has learnt the lesson that to brood over sins committed is a worthless exercise.

The shining face of God is remembered in John 14:9 and in Hebrews 1:3; also in the Gospels at the time of the transfiguration (cf. Mt 17:2; cf. 2 Cor 4:6). The gaze of God saves, also in our present time.

• **81 (80)** The psalm opens joyfully but the complaints of the divine voice (vv. 12-13) sound strangely out of place. There is a second inconsistency: the trumpet or ram's horn (jobel, hence our 'jubilee') is to be sounded 'at the new moon, when the moon is full.' To deal with the second puzzle, first: it is possible that the harvest-feast of Tabernacles is referred to here (celebrated at the full moon in the lunar month of September-October) is also the first day of the New Year (the first day of the same month). The first difficulty is lessened if we suppose that the people sing verses 2 to 6 exultantly. But a prophet in the sanctuary reminds them that the joy should be tempered with self-mistrust. If past experiences teach anything, it should teach them this—and ourselves as well.

This psalm urges us to listen to the voice of the Lord, because idols are with us, even today. 'We lack dynamism to evangelize and change the world: this is because, we still have idols even in our apostolic planning. God himself in the Transfiguration tells in Mathew 17:5, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, my Chosen One. Listen to him.'

God keeps His promise. If only we would listen, we would have food for body and soul.

⁹Hear, my people, as I admonish you.

If only you would listen, O Israel!

¹⁰There shall be no strange god among you,
you shall not worship any alien god,

20:1

¹¹for I, Yahweh, am your God,
who led you forth from the land of Egypt.

¹²But my people did not listen;
Israel did not obey.

¹³So I gave them over to their stubbornness
and they followed their own counsels.

Jer 3:17;
7:24

¹⁴If only my people would listen,
if only Israel would walk in my ways,

¹⁵I would quickly subdue their adversaries
and turn my hand against their enemies.

¹⁶Those who hate Yahweh would cringe before him,
and their panic would last forever.

¹⁷I would feed you with the finest wheat
and satisfy you with honey from the rock."

Dt 32:13

PSALM 82 (81)

Judgment on corrupt authority.

• **82 (81)** God presides over every court, however eminent the judges. It is possible that the judges mentioned here are the 'beggarly elemental spirits,' dictatorial 'beings that by nature are no gods' (Col 2:8ff) but in effect, are worshipped by so many. The stars, for example, have their devotees still, and horoscopes are popular. From this text, Jesus gently vindicated his own claim to be Son of God, with authority delegated by his Father. He would not blind his interlocutors with revelation. Time was needed, before the full meaning of this pregnant title could be declared.

This is a psalm for those who are not in agreement with social chaos and expect someone to do them justice.

¹God presides in the divine council;
he gives judgment among the gods:

89:6;
4:16

²"How long will you judge unjustly
and show partiality to the wicked?"

Mic 3

³Give justice to the weak and the orphan;
defend the poor and the oppressed.

Jer 5:28;
Job
29:12

⁴Rescue the helpless and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

23:6

⁵Without knowledge and understanding,
they walk about in darkness;
all the earth's foundations are shaken.

⁶"You are gods," I said,
"you are all sons of the Most High."

Jn 10:34

⁷But now, you will die like the others;
you will all fall, like any mortal.

⁸Rise, O God, judge the earth,
you who guide all the nations.

PSALM 83 (82)**A nation's appeal to God for help against destruction.**44:24;
50:3;
109:1²Do not be silent, O God, hold not your peace; be not unmoved!³See, how your enemies are astir; those who hate you rear their heads.Jer
11:19⁴Craftily, they plot against your people, they conspire against those you protect.⁵They say, "Let us finish them as a nation. Let the name of Israel be forgotten!"⁶With one heart they devise a scheme, and form an alliance against you: ⁷the people of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the progeny of Hagar,Jos
13:2⁸Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia, with the people of Tyre.⁹Those from Sur are in league with them, and lend support to Lot's descendants.Jdg
6-8¹⁰Deal with them as you did with Midian, with Sisera and Yabin, at the river Kishon;¹¹they perished at Endor, and became dung for the ground.Jdg
7:25;
8:21¹²Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their chiefs like Zebah and Zalmunna, ¹³who said, "Let us seize the pasture lands of God."¹⁴O my God, make them like leaves caught in a whirlwind, like chaff, helpless, before the wind.¹⁵As fire consumes the forest, as flames set the mountains ablaze, ¹⁶drive them out with your tempest and terrify them with your storm.¹⁷Cover their faces with shame, O Yahweh, that they may seek your name.¹⁸Let them be dismayed and abashed forever; let them perish in disgrace.

97:9

¹⁹Let them know that you alone, whose name is Yahweh, are the Most High, over all the world.**PSALM 84 (83)****Love and longing for God's temple.**²How lovely are your rooms, O Yahweh of hosts!42:3, 9;
122:1³My soul yearns; pines, for the courts of Yahweh. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

• **83 (82)** This reads like a very old psalm indeed. One is tempted to date it as early as the eighth, or even the tenth century, before Christ. There is an international conspiracy against Israel. This is not the first time: the ancient enemies mentioned in the books of Exodus and Judges (for example Jdg 4 and 7) thought they could destroy a people that belonged to God. But the Lord of creation has cosmic weapons at his disposal: 'the stars in their courses fought against Sisera' (Jdg 5:20) as 'the sun has stood still' for Joshua (Jos 10:12). The powers of evil are impotent against the people of God so long as these remember to use the right kind of sword, which is the sword of the spirit.

How many men and women, old people and children are the victims of international alliances today! Couldn't we pray with this psalm?

God knows what to do and how to deal with everyone. Therefore, if we reflect on these tremendously powerful words of wisdom, and follow Jesus' instructions, we will live without fear and book our berth in heaven.

• **84 (83)** The home of God on earth! What can this mean? There can be no change in God. He cannot move into a new house. No, the change is in human things! God is everywhere already but consecrates certain places, where people can meet

him and feel his presence more intimately. There is a power there, without which, not a sparrow falls to the ground, but also a peace that encourages the sparrow to build its nest. Such a home of God, stood on the hill of Zion. It is a weary climb for the pilgrim at the end of his journey but strengthening him when he paused to raise his eyes. The end of every pilgrimage lies further off, and it is a very weary climb for all. Our city is heaven, but in a sense it is here too: 'you came near to Mount Zion, the city of the living God' (Heb 12:22), because the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us: in a new sense the earth is the Lord's.

There are people who visit the Temple; but do not enjoy the love of God, who dwells therein. They do not experience a transformation of conduct because they placed their trust in the Temple of God, not in the God of the Temple. This psalm can come with us, when we go on pilgrimages and religious festivals.

⁴Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O Yahweh of hosts,
my King and my God!

5:3

⁵Happy are those who live in your house,
continually singing your praise!
⁶Happy, the pilgrims whom you strengthen,
to make the ascent to you.

⁷As they pass through the Valley,
they make it a place of springs,
the early rain covers it with blessings.

Ezk
34:26;
Jl 2:23

⁸They go from strength to strength
till they appear before God in Zion.

⁹O Yahweh of hosts, hear my prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob!

¹⁰Look upon our shield, O God;
look upon the face of your Anointed!

¹¹One day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be left at the threshold
in the house of my God
than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.

¹²For Yahweh God is a sun and a shield;
he bestows favor and glory.

Yahweh withholds no good thing
from those who walk in uprightness.

¹³O Yahweh of hosts,
blessed are those who trust in you.

PSALM 85 (84)

The coming age of peace and justice.

• **85 (84)** This psalm, written when the Israelites had returned from captivity in Babylon, adopts the most universal terms of the human vocabulary: liberty, life, joy, salvation, love, justice, peace, and happiness. This return of the exiled Jews, however, was only one step toward authentic liberation. Nothing is definitive and each phase in the realization of God's plan, leads us to another stage. God's people are forever being called to go further ahead. Even the actual reign of the risen

²You have favored your land, O Yahweh;
you have brought back the exiles of Jacob.

126;
53:7

³You have forgiven the sin of your people;
you have pardoned their offenses.

⁴You have withdrawn your wrath
and turned from your burning rage.

⁵But restore us, God our savior;
put away, altogether, your indignation.

80:4

⁶Will your anger be ever with us,
carried over to all generations?

⁷ Will you not give us life anew,
that your people may rejoice in you?
⁸ Show us, O Yahweh, your unfailing love,
and grant us your saving help.

⁹ Would, that I hear God's proclamation,
that he promise peace to his people,
his saints—lest they come back to their folly.

Is 51:5;
24:16;
Ezk
11:23;
43:2;
Jn 1:14
¹⁰ Yet, his salvation is near to those who fear him,
and his glory will dwell in our land.

89:15;
97:2
¹¹ Love and faithfulness have met;
righteousness and peace have embraced.

Is 45:8
¹² Faithfulness will reach up from the earth
while justice bends down from heaven.

67:7;
Zec 8:12
¹³ Yahweh will give what is good,
and our land will yield its fruit.

Is 58:8;
Zec 9:10
¹⁴ Justice will go before him,
and peace will follow along his path.

PSALM 86 (85)

Loyalty in God's service.

40:18
¹ Listen, O Yahweh, and answer me, for I am
afflicted and needy.

25:20
² Preserve my life, for I am God-fearing; save
your servant who trusts in you.

³ Have mercy on me, O Yahweh, for I cry to
you all day.

25:1
⁴ Bring joy to the soul of your servant; for you,
O Yahweh, I lift up my soul.

⁵ You are good and forgiving, O Yahweh, car-
ing for those who call on you.

5:2-3
⁶ Listen, O Yahweh, to my prayer, hear the
voice of my pleading.

77:3
⁷ I call on you in the time of my trouble, for
you will answer me.

15:11;
Ps 35:10;
89:9;
Jer 10:6
⁸ None is like you, O Yahweh, among the gods;
your works are beyond compare.

Rev
15:4;
Ps 22:28
⁹ All the nations you have made will come;
they will worship before you, O Yahweh, and
bring glory to your name.

¹⁰ For you are great, and wonderful are your
deeds; you alone, are God.

26:3;
27:11
¹¹ Teach me, O Yahweh, how to walk in your
truth, that my heart may fear your name.

¹² I give thanks to you, O Yahweh my God; I
will glorify your name forever,

Christ and the work of salvation accomplished by the Church, are only an image of the eternal kingdom. God loves our earth. When we feel troubled and discouraged by what is ugly around us, let us come back to the declaration of this psalm: You have favored your land, O Lord; justice bends down from heaven; glory will dwell in our land (vv. 2, 10, 12). Salvation comes from God, but is brought by a man, Christ, freely welcomed by a woman in the name of humanity. With the Incarnation, it is not possible to believe in God, without believing in humankind.

• **86 (85)** This is a gentle psalm, a little muted in tone, without cries for help or loud shouts of anguish. The psalmist, here, is making a sincere and true appeal to God to answer his prayer. There are always enemies about; but God is not asked to destroy them (a refreshing change!). He is asked only to 'turn and take pity' on the persecuted. The first seven verses are the perfect prayer. God could scarcely resist it. The psalmist never stops asking, and he is rightly sure that such a God could never stop giving. He persuades God with his mother's virtues too (v. 16). It is a very homely psalm.

Whenever we live moments of anguish, whatever their cause, it will be good for us to confide our burden on another, on God, whose presence in this psalm, is comforting. Jesus tells us in Mathew 11:24: 'Whatever you ask for in prayer full of faith, you will receive.' We have this assurance from Jesus himself. So, full of faith, let us also pray to God, for whatever we need, assured that it will be answered.

¹³for great has been your love for me; you ^{88:7}
have saved me from the grave.

¹⁴O God, the insolent are against me; a band ^{54:5}
of cut-throats, evildoers who do not hold you in
reverence.

¹⁵But you, O Yahweh God, are merciful, slow ^{34:6;}
to anger, loving and faithful. ^{Ps 103:8;}
^{145:8}

¹⁶Turn to me, take pity on me; give your ^{25:16;}
strength to your servant, and save the child of ^{116:16}
your handmaid.

¹⁷Give me a sign of your grace, that my foes
may see, to their disgrace, that you, O Yahweh,
are my help and comfort.

PSALM 87 (86)

God's city, mother of all nations.

• **87 (86)** The universalist's outlook here is truly astonishing. It is not that Zion ceases to be the center of the world. This, in the psalmist perspective, will always be so. To offer the hand in friendship to Babylon and Egypt, the ancient persecutors, is truly magnanimous. It may speak of the Jews exiled in those countries. This would turn the wide and gracious gesture of verses 4 and 5 into something clumsy and ungenerous. This psalm may be compared to a passage of the prophet Zechariah (8:20-23; cf. also 14:16) where people from foreign countries, 'take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying: Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.' There is a Jew the whole world has heard of, and his surname is Emmanuel, which means 'God with us.' The Church is our "city" the mother of all (cf. Eph 2:12-19; Gal 4:26). This is a good psalm to celebrate universal fraternity or to put ecumenism into practice.

¹He himself has built it in his holy mountain; ^{48:2}

²Yahweh prefers the gates of Zion
to all of Jacob's towns.

³Great things have been foretold
of you, O City of God:

⁴Between friends, we speak of Egypt and
Babylon;

and also Philistia, Tyre, Ethiopia:
"Here so-and-so was born."

⁵But of Zion, it shall be said,
"More and more are being born in her."

For the Most High himself has founded her.

⁶And Yahweh notes in the people's register:
"All these were also born in Zion."

^{Is 4:3;}
^{Ezk 13:9}

⁷And all will dance and sing
joyfully for you.

PSALM 88 (87)

Prayer in desolation.

• **88 (87)** This psalm ends in an incomparable sad note. The psalmist seems very dejected, frustrated and helpless. One is so used to hearing him complain

²O Yahweh, my God, I call for help by day;
before you I cry out by night.

³May my prayer come to you; incline your ear
to my cry for help.

⁴My soul is deeply troubled; my life draws near to the grave. ⁵I am like those without strength.

Counted among those going down into the pit—⁶I lie forsaken, among the dead, like those lying in the grave, like those you remember no more, cut off from your care.

⁷You have plunged me into the darkest depths of the pit.

⁸With your wrath heavy upon me, you have battered me with all your waves.

^{38:12} ⁹You have taken away my closest friends; you have made me repulsive to them. I cannot escape from my confinement.

¹⁰My eyes have grown dim with grief; spreading out my hands to you, I call upon you every day, O Yahweh.

^{6:6;} ¹⁵ ^{38:18} ¹¹Are your wonders meant for the dead? Will ghosts rise to give you thanks?

¹²Is your love and faithfulness remembered among those gone to the netherworld?

¹³Are your wonders known in the dark; your salvation, in the land of oblivion?

¹⁴But to you, O Yahweh, I cry for help; every morning I pray to you.

¹⁵O Yahweh, why do you reject me; why do you hide your face?

¹⁶Afflicted, and close to death from youth, I have suffered terrors and helplessness.

¹⁷Your wrath has swept over me; your assaults have destroyed me.

¹⁸Now, they surround me, like a flood; and completely engulf me.

¹⁹Bereft of loved ones, and now alone, only darkness is my companion.

^{Job}
^{19:13}

PSALM 89 (88)

The magnificent promises of God.

²I will sing forever, O Yahweh, of your love, and proclaim your faithfulness from age to age.

³I will declare how steadfast is your love, how firm your faithfulness.

⁴You said, "I have made a Covenant with David, my chosen one; I have made a pledge to my servant. ⁵I establish his descendants forever; I build his throne for all generations."

^{2S} 7:
^{8-16;}
^{23:5;}
^{Acts} 2:30

⁶The heavens proclaim your wonders, O

about his 'enemies.' When he does not, his silence is audible. The complaint is directed to God, but if God is an enemy, what hope is there? In this psalm, there is no ray of light. It is a cry in the dark. The inhuman enemy is sickness in a lonely old age: only God, whose messenger it is, can make the message bearable.

It would seem that knowing Christ, we couldn't sink into despair. There are, however, days when heaven is closed for us, as it was for Jesus in his agony.

The 'why?' of the psalm is heard on the cross (cf. Mt 27:46). The answer will come at dawn (cf. 1 P 3:18; 1 Cor 15:54). This supplication of a dying person can be sung by all those who are dying or live in the silence of God. Let's not forget that, at dawn, our supplication will rise up to meet God.

• **89 (88)** The question 'why' comes up. The psalmist is worried about the fate of the Davidic king—perhaps the death at Megiddo of the devout Josiah in the year 609 B.C. and the extinction of the dynasty, a few years later. If this in fact was the occasion of the psalm, we can all the more admire the faith of the psalmist, in such hard times. The messianic promise (2 Sam 7)

was made by God, so were the heavens. Each has the same guarantee. There is no doubt about God's power and all kingship comes from him (vv. 6-19). There is no doubt about God's promises either (vv. 20-38) so whatever has happened (vv. 39-52), cannot be final. The psalmist was right: 'You shall name him Jesus... and the Lord will give him the throne of his father David... and of his kingdom there will be no end' (Lk 1:31ff).

Those very powerful words "love" and "faithfulness" occur at least 4 times each in this psalm, and not without a purpose. Jesus has explained to us in no uncertain terms throughout the Gospels the power of these words. If only these could become part of our daily agenda, then we can assure ourselves of happiness here on earth and eternity.

Here is a good psalm to pray in times of national or international conflict. If a human being is injured, God is injured. The love of God is faithful. Despite everything, the love of God cannot turn back.

Yahweh; the assembly of the holy ones recalls your faithfulness. ⁷Who in the skies can compare with Yahweh; who, of the heaven-born, is like him?

⁸A God feared in the council of the holy ones; awesome, to those who approach him.

⁹O Yahweh God of hosts, who is like you, clothed in might and faithfulness?

¹⁰You reign over the surging sea; you calm its raging waves. ¹¹You split Rahab like a carcass; with your strong arm you routed your foes. 65:8
74:14;
Job
26:12

¹²Yours are the heavens and the earth; you founded the world and everything in it. 24:1

¹³You created the north and the south—Tabor and Hermon rejoice at your name.

¹⁴You have a powerful arm; mighty and exalted is your right hand!

¹⁵Justice and righteousness are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you. 97:2

¹⁶Blessed is the people who know your praise. They walk in the light of your face. ¹⁷They celebrate all day, your name and your protection lifts them up.

¹⁸You give us glory and power; and your favor gives us victory. ¹⁹Our king is in the hands of Yahweh; the God of Israel is our shield.

²⁰In the past, you spoke in a vision; you said of your faithful servant: 2S 7:8

'I have set the crown upon a mighty one; on one chosen from the people.

²¹I have found David my servant, and, with my holy oil, I have anointed him. 1S:16;
Acts
13:22

²²My hand will be ever with him; and my arm will sustain him; ²³no enemy shall outwit him, nor the wicked oppress him.

²⁴I will crush his foes before him and strike down his adversaries.

²⁵My faithfulness and love will be with him; and, by my help, he will be strong.

²⁶I will set his hand over the sea, his right hand over the rivers.

²⁷He will call on me, 'You are my Father, my God, my Rock, my Savior.'
2S 7:14;
Ps 2:7;
18:3

²⁸I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. Rev 1:5

²⁹I will keep my Covenant firm forever, and my love for him will endure.

³⁰His dynasty will last forever; and his throne, as long as the heavens.

³¹If his sons forsake my law and fail to follow my decrees, ³²if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments,

^{2S 7:14} ³³I will punish their crime with the rod, and their offenses, with the scourge; ³⁴yet, I will not withdraw my love from him, nor will I withdraw my faithfulness.

³⁵I will be true to my promises and not break my Covenant. ³⁶Did I not swear by my holiness? I will not lie to David.

³⁷His dynasty will last forever, and his throne endures, as the sun before me.

^{Rev 1:5} ³⁸It will shine forever, like the moon, the unfailing watch of heavens.”

³⁹But now, you have rejected, disowned, and raged at your anointed.

⁴⁰You have disregarded your Covenant and cast off the crown of your servant.

^{80:13-14} ⁴¹You have destroyed his walls; and reduced his strongholds to rubble. ⁴²The victim of despoilers, he has become the scorn of his neighbors.

⁴³You have exalted the right hand of his foes; you have made his enemies rejoice.

⁴⁴You have turned the edge of his sword, and have not stood by him in battle. ⁴⁵You have wrenched the scepter from his hand and flung his throne to the ground.

⁴⁶You have shortened the time of his splendor and covered him with shame.

^{79:5} ⁴⁷How long, O Yahweh, will you hide? How long will anger burn like a fire?

⁴⁸Consider how short my life is, how shadowy the human destiny.

⁴⁹What mortal can live and never see death? Who will escape from the netherworld?

⁵⁰O Yahweh, where is your former great love, the faithfulness you pledged to David?

⁵¹Remember, O Yahweh, how your servant is despised; how I suffer the scorn of the peoples, ⁵²the taunts with which your enemies have mocked every step of your Anointed.

⁵³*Blessed be Yahweh forever! Amen, Amen.*

• **90 (89)** The plural pronouns surely indicate that this psalm was sung in community. It hardly reads like a national song and the application is surely to the congregation as individuals. The ‘anger’ and ‘wrath’ of God (v. 11) have been used before (cf. Ps 6:2) as a description of the brevity and the pain of life. Certainly, he can admire those who loved God without them. As these grew older, one might have thought, their love of God would weaken in proportion, since they had less to hope for. But, instead, it seemed to strengthen. Is this perhaps because the revelation was beginning to dawn already?

What is the meaning of our life? What are our values? We cannot elaborate a ‘tomorrow’ for ourselves, without counting on God. This psalm can help us.

Our days pass like a sigh. Our earthly life is short and frail before the face of the eternal God. He is our refuge and can give meaning to our existence. Let us ask him to fill it with wisdom, which is to love him, praise him and serve him.

• **91 (90)** The devil can quote Scripture (Mt 4:6). He was shrewd enough to recognize a quality and to try to play on its defects. But this is not quite accurate, because presumption is not a flaw that corresponds to trust

PSALM 90 (89)

Pondering the brevity of life.

¹Yahweh, you have been our refuge through all generations.

²Before the mountains were formed, before you made the earth and the world, from eternity to eternity—you are God.

³You turn humans back to dust, saying, Gen 3:19 “Return, O mortals!”

⁴A thousand years in your sight are like a day 2P 3:8 that has passed, or like a watch in the night.

⁵You sow them in their time, at dawn they peep out. ⁶In the morning they blossom, but the flower fades and withers in the evening.

⁷Your fury consumes us like fire, and we are helpless before your anger.

⁸Our evils lie before you, who scrutinize our hidden sins.

⁹Our days pass away in your wrath; our years are gone in no time.

¹⁰Seventy years to our life, or eighty if we are strong; yet, most of them are sorrow and trouble; speeding by, they sweep us along. Ecl 12:1-7

¹¹Who knows the extent of your anger? Who has seen the end of your wrath?

¹²So make us know the shortness of our life, that we may gain wisdom of heart.

¹³How long will you be angry, O Yahweh? Have mercy on your servant.

¹⁴Fill us at daybreak with your goodness, that we may be glad all our days.

¹⁵Make joy endure, as the misery did, and the years in which we were afflicted.

¹⁶Let your work be seen by your servants and your glorious power by their children.

¹⁷May the sweetness of Yahweh be upon us; may he prosper the work of our hands.

PSALM 91 (90)

Under the wing of God’s protection.

¹You, who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who rest in the shadow of the Almighty,

²say to Yahweh, “My stronghold, my refuge, my God in whom I trust!”

³He will rescue you from the fowler’s snare

and from the deadly pestilence.

Dt 32:11;
Ps 17:8;
Ru 2:12;
Mt 23:37

⁴He will cover you with his pinions
and give you refuge under his wings.

Song
3:8;
Pro 3:25

⁵You shall not fear the terror of the night
nor the arrows that fly by day,

Dt 32:24;
Jer 15:8;
Sir 34:16

⁶nor the pestilence that stalks by night,
and the plague that destroys at noonday.

⁷A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but nothing shall befall you,
his faithfulness is your shield.

⁸Open your eyes:
you will see how the wicked are repaid.

⁹If you have made Yahweh your refuge,
the Most High your stronghold,

Pro
12:21;
Dt 7:15

¹⁰no harm will come upon you;
no disaster will draw near your home.

Mt 4:6;
Heb 1:14

¹¹For he will command his angels
to guard you in all your ways.

Pro 3:23

¹²They will lift you up with their hands,
so that your foot will not hit a stone.

Is 11:8;
Job 5:22;
Lk 10:19

¹³You will tread on wildcats and snakes,
and trample the lion and the dragon.

9:11

¹⁴“Because they cling to me, I will rescue
them,” says Yahweh.

“I will protect those who know my name.

Jer 33:3;
Is 43:2

¹⁵When they call to me, I will answer;
in time of trouble, I will be with them;
I will deliver and honor them.

Dt 4:40;
Pro
32:3;
10:27;
Job 5:26;
Ps 50:23;
23:6

¹⁶I will satisfy them with long life;
and show them my salvation.”

PSALM 92 (91)

Song of a happy person.

33:1-3

²It is good to give thanks to Yahweh,
to sing praise to your name, O Most High,
³to proclaim your grace in the morning,
to declare your faithfulness at night,
⁴accompanied by music from the lyre
and the melody of lute and harp.

⁵For you make me glad with your deeds, O Yahweh,
and I sing for joy at the work of your hands.

8;
139:6;
139;
17:18;
Wis 13:5

⁶How great are your works,
O Yahweh, how deep your thoughts!

in God. The child who leaves his mother's hand and tries his own two legs does not trust her but himself. In any case, we must not let the devil spoil this psalm for us. For many people it is the most consoling of the Psalter, and small wonder. It assures us, in several strangely assorted paths of a God waiting—and longing—to be asked!

This is a powerful psalm prayed daily for protection against the powers of the Evil One. It is so powerful that even the devil tried to use it (see verses 11 and 12) in his own devious way, to tempt Jesus in the desert (Mt 4:6). Of course, he was not successful and therefore, we have the assurance that he will not be successful in tempting us either.

It will be good to pray with this psalm, to ratify and purify our trust in God, precisely when dangers besiege us.

• **92 (91)** We are not animals, not simply rational animals: we are sons and daughters of God. We learn in prayer, to look at the world as God sees it. We are joined to Christ as the branch to the vine, and we try to make our minds, and our lives, grow more like his.

The virtuous will flourish like palm trees (v. 13): enthusiasm of the one whose life is built on faithfulness. He has seen the fall of many fortunes and much

glory. The martyr St. Polycarp said to his judges: 'How could I curse Christ? For eighty years he has always been good to me.' The saints are those who leave the most lasting impact on human history. 'Give thanks to the Lord' (v. 2). If we reflect on our lives, we will find many reasons to give thanks to God. The gift of our very life and existence is a good starting point. St. Paul tells us to 'give thanks to God at every moment' (1 Thes 5:18) in the name of Christ Jesus, our Lord (Eph 5:20).

- ⁷The senseless will not know,
nor will the stupid understand them. Wis13:1;
Ps73:22
- ⁸For though the wicked prosper
and evildoers flourish like grass,
they are doomed to vanish for good. 37:35-36
- ⁹But you, O Yahweh, are exalted forever.
- ¹⁰Time will come when your enemies will
perish;
evildoers will be scattered. 68:2-3
- ¹¹You have made me stronger than the wild ox;
you have poured fresh oil on me. 91:8
- ¹²I look down on my enemies;
I take for granted their doom.
- ¹³The virtuous will flourish, like palm trees,
they will thrive, like the cedars of Lebanon. 1:3
- ¹⁴Planted in the house of Yahweh,
they will prosper, in the courts of our God. 52:10
- ¹⁵In old age, they will still bear fruit;
they will stay fresh and green,
- ¹⁶to proclaim that Yahweh is upright,
"He is my Rock," they say, "he never fails." Dt 32:4

PSALM 93 (92)

Praise of God, king of the world.

• **93 (92)** This is the first of the 'royal' psalms (93; 95–100) celebrating the kingship of God, creator and controller of our universe, whose eternal tranquility contrasts with the restless sea. He is so calm and silent that we might think he sleeps. But only the God-made-man could sleep. Even then, when the apostles cried to him, 'He rebuked the wind and said to the sea: Peace! Be still! The wind ceased and there was made a great calm' (Mk 4:39). 'You are a king then?' said Pilate. He is indeed—though his kingship was hidden. But now, he sits at the right hand. We are of his Kingdom. Let us sing to our Lord, ascended and enthroned in heaven.

The Lord of history and of nature is much stronger than awesome historical conflicts.

- ¹Yahweh reigns, robed in majesty;
Yahweh is girded with strength. 47:8;
96:10;
97:1;
99:1;
Is 52:7;
Ps104:5
- The world now, is firm; it cannot be moved.
- ²Your throne stands from long ago, O Yahweh;
from all eternity you are. 90:2
- ³The floods have lifted up, O Yahweh,
the floods have lifted up their roaring,
the floods have lifted up their pounding waves. 18:5
- ⁴Mightier than the thunder of great waters,
mightier than the breakers of the sea,
Yahweh on high, is mighty! 29:10
- ⁵Your decrees can be trusted;
holiness dwells in your house,
day after day, without end, O Yahweh. 1K 9:3

PSALM 94 (93)**God, the judge and vindicator.**

¹ O Yahweh God, vengeance is yours; O God, who avenges, show yourself!

² Judge of the world, repay the proud with what they deserve.

³ How long shall the wicked, O Yahweh, how long shall the wicked exult?

⁴ Pouring out words of arrogance, evildoers make a show of their insolence.

⁵ They crush your people, O Yahweh, they oppress your inheritance.

⁶ They murder the widow and the lonely; they massacre the helpless;

10:11

⁷ "Yahweh does not see," they say, "the God of Jacob does not care."

⁸ Remember this, you stupid people; when will you understand, you fools!

⁹ He who made the ear, will he not hear? He who formed the eye, will he not see?

¹⁰ He who rebukes nations, will he not punish them?

1Cor
3:20

¹¹ Yahweh knows the thoughts of humans, that they are a puff of wind.

119:71;
Job 5:17

¹² Fortunate the one you correct, O Yahweh, the one you teach your law;

¹³ you give them relief from distress, while a pit is dug for the wicked.

Rom
11:2;
1S12:22

¹⁴ Yahweh will not reject his people, nor will he forsake his heritage.

¹⁵ Justice will return to the just; and the upright will follow, in its wake.

¹⁶ Who stands up for me against the wicked? Who stands by me against evildoers?

¹⁷ Had Yahweh not helped me, I would have fallen into the silence of death.

¹⁸ No sooner did I say, "My foot is slipping," your kindness, O Yahweh, held me up.

¹⁹ The more worries and trouble assailed me, the more you consoled me.

²⁰ You shun wicked rulers, who impose injustice by law.

²¹ They plot together, against the virtuous, and condemn the innocent.

²² But Yahweh is my stronghold, my God, my rock of refuge.

²³ He will repay them for their evil and destroy

• **94 (93)** We must sometimes ask ourselves 'is it all worthwhile?' Religion doesn't seem to make much difference, certainly doesn't seem to make us any happier. But in spite of all difficulties, we know that God does care. He has redeemed us. And if we believe in redemption, then, we must believe in judgment. He cares for us, and he cares about us: what people do does matter. But the difficulties are still there, and we need this vehement act of faith in God who cares.

The psalmist seems very preoccupied about his neighbor. Knowing that it would trouble us too, Jesus offered us a solution when he said, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Mk 12:31). Also, 'Do not judge and you will not be judged' (Mt 7:1) and, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you' (Mt 5:44). If we follow these basic principles, which Jesus has taught us, we will not worry about what happens all around us. Instead, it will bring us calm and peace assured of our lives here on earth as well as in heaven.

them for their wickedness; Yahweh, our God, will blot them out.

PSALM 95 (94)

Call to praise and worship: a processional hymn.

• **95 (94)** God claimed a double kingship over Israel. She had been created and she had been chosen. Here, she is invited to celebrate both creation and choice. But she is warned, too. The flock divinely led from Egypt had disputed with Moses and tested God's patience by its complaints. We may still thwart the grace of our call—it does not inevitably blossom into the glory of final choice. Our calling is much higher than Israel's. From the people's point of view, our election, what we call perseverance, is more sublime. Not Moses but Jesus, is our leader now, and the 'rest' he would take us to is not Palestine but a land which the meek inherit, a rest which is the eternal Sabbath of God (Heb 4:10). Pray to hear not 'Never shall they enter!' but 'Come, you blessed!'

¹ Come, let us sing to Yahweh,
let us make a joyful sound
to the Rock of our salvation.

Dt 32:15

² Let us come before him giving thanks,
with music and songs of praise.

³ For Yahweh is the great God,
the great King above all gods.

47:3;
95:4;
Job
36:22
Dn 2:47

⁴ In his hand, are the depths of the earth
and the mountain heights.

⁵ The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hand shaped the dry land.

24:1-2

⁶ Come and worship; let us bow down,
kneel before Yahweh, our Maker.

100:3;
23:1-4;
80:2;
19:5;
Heb
3:7-11

⁷ He is our God, and we, his people;
the flock he leads and pastures.

Would, that today, you heard his voice!

Num 20:

⁸ Do not be stubborn, as at Meribah,
in the desert, on that day at Massah,

23:13;
Dt 33:8;
Ps 81:8;
17:1-7;
Dt 6:16;
9:22

⁹ when your ancestors challenged me,
and they put me to the test.

Num
14:22

¹⁰ For forty years they wearied me, and I said,

"They are a people of inconstant heart;
they have not known my ways."

Num
14:34;
Ps 78:
8, 37;
Dt 32: 5,
20;

¹¹ So I declared on oath, in my anger,

Job 21:14

"Never shall they enter my rest."

Num
14:30;
Dt 12:9

PSALM 96 (95)

The universal reign of the true God.

• **96 (95)** What can we bring to God, the Lord of the world? What gift is worthy of our God, our King? Before anything else we bring him praise (v. 7), adoration and delighted recognition of what he is. We proclaim the glory of the Creator, on behalf of all creation, and we wish our praise to resound throughout the whole of creation.

The psalmist suggests in verse 8 that we 'bring gifts.' If we do it with a sincere heart, then all our

¹ Sing to Yahweh a new song,
sing to Yahweh, all the earth!

98:1;
33:3

² Sing to Yahweh, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation, day after day.

98:2;
105:1

³ Recall his glory among the nations,
tell all the peoples his wonderful deeds.

⁴ How great is Yahweh and worthy of praise!
Above all gods, he is to be feared.

48:2;
145:3;
95:3;

⁵ For all other gods are worthless idols,
but Yahweh is the one who made the heavens.

95:3;
Is 40:
17-20;
Ps 97:7;
1Cor 8:
4-6

⁶Splendor and majesty go before him;
power and glory fill his Sanctuary.

^{29:1-2} ⁷Give to Yahweh, you families of nations,
give to Yahweh glory and strength.

⁸Give to Yahweh the glory due his name;
bring gifts and enter his courts.

^{29:2; 114:7} ⁹Worship Yahweh with holy celebrations;
stand in awe of him, all the earth.

^{93:1; 9:9} ¹⁰Say among the nations, "Yahweh reigns!"
He will judge the peoples with justice.

^{98:7} ¹¹Let the heavens be glad, the earth rejoice;
let the sea and all that fills it resound;

^{Is 55:12} ¹²let the fields exult and everything in them;
let the forest, all the trees, sing for joy.

^{98:9} ¹³Let them sing before Yahweh
who comes to judge the earth.
He will rule the world with justice,
and the peoples, with fairness.

PSALM 97 (96)

Earth rejoices in its king.

^{93:1; 96:10-11; 99:1} ¹Yahweh reigns; let the earth rejoice;
let the distant islands be glad.

^{Dt 5:22; Ps 68:11; 89:15} ²Clouds and darkness surround him;
justice and right, are his throne.

^{18:9; 50:3} ³Fire goes before him,
burning his foes on every side.

^{77:19} ⁴His lightning lights up the world;
the earth watches and trembles.

^{Mic 1:4; Ps 68:3} ⁵The mountains melt like wax
before Yahweh, the Lord of all the earth.

^{50:6} ⁶The heavens proclaim his justice,
all peoples see his glory.

^{96:5; Heb 1:6} ⁷Shame on worshipers of idols,
on those proud of their worthless images.
Let all spirits bow before him.

^{48:12} ⁸Zion hears and rejoices,
and the cities of Judah exult,
because of your judgments, O God.

^{83:19; 95:3} ⁹For you are the Master of the universe,
exalted far above all gods.

¹⁰You who love Yahweh, hate evil,

gifts of prayer and worship and good deeds and trust and faith and mercy and kindness and devotion will be accepted with love, and in His love we will forever stay.

More than on the splendor of the universe, human society is founded on justice that glorifies God: there is joy in creation when God establishes his kingdom among us. Yes, joy of the universe, until then devastated by our exaggerated ambitions. Joy of nations that have discovered why they exist!

As we continue to express our desire for the reign of God to come to the world, we can pray with this psalm.

• **97 (96)** The glory, the magnificence, the splendor of God—this could strike us with terror so that we might cry out like St. Peter, 'Depart from us!' But that glory is our light (v. 11); we are even called to share that glory. So for us, the majesty of God is not an object of terror, but a subject of exultation.

We often find it hard to share the enthusiasm and joy of the psalmist, who clearly sees the world divided between the good and the wicked. We rather see the world covered by a fog, where each of us has our own excuses and share of wickedness. The confusion is temporary. However, there is good seed and there are weeds, and each one goes toward what he prefers. God hates evil, as much as he loves himself, and what cannot return to God, should be destroyed.

for he preserves the lives of his faithful;
he delivers them from their foes.

¹¹He sheds light upon the upright,
and gladness upon the just. 112:4

¹²Rejoice in Yahweh, you, who are blameless;
and give praise to his holy name. 30:5

PSALM 98 (97)

Orchestra of praise to God, King of the world.

• **98 (97)** Our Lord founded the kingdom of God on earth; and yet we pray: 'Your kingdom come.' The work of our redemption has been accomplished, but we still pray for this salvation, to be perfected throughout the world: God has come; but we look for his final coming, to take possession of his kingdom.

Sing to the Lord a new song (v. 1). Humanity has found the way to liberation and salvation. It is in the coming of Christ, God-made-man and in his resurrection.

For the Lord came down to earth, showed us His love and also by His death and resurrection, the path to eternal salvation.

¹Sing to Yahweh a new song, for he has done wonders; his right hand, his holy arm, has won victory for him. 96:1; Is 42:10; Ps 86:10; 34:10; Is 51:5

²Yahweh has shown his salvation, revealing his justice to the nations.

³He has not forgotten his love, nor his faithfulness to Israel. The farthest ends of the earth all have seen God's saving power. Lk 1:54; Is 52:10

⁴All you, lands, make a joyful noise to Yahweh, break into song and sing praise, ⁵with melody of the lyre and with music of the harp. 66:1; 100:1; 147:7

⁶With trumpet blast and sound of the horn, rejoice before the King, Yahweh! Num 10:10

⁷Let the sea resound and everything in it, the world and all its people. 96:11; 24:1

⁸Let rivers clap their hands, hills and mountains sing with joy ⁹before Yahweh, for he comes to rule the earth. He will judge the world with justice, and the peoples, with fairness. 89:13; Is 55:12; 96:13; 9:9; 67:5

PSALM 99 (98)

The power and holiness of God.

• **99 (98)** Our God is Almighty, infinitely above our world—but not remote from it. On his word, the world depends. His law is the rule of life. And the Church is the place of contact between the Holy God and people called to be holy.

Holiness does not mean evasion from the world, but commitment to it. Those who pray this psalm, desire the Name of God to be sanctified and the world to be transformed by divine holiness.

¹Yahweh reigns and the nations tremble. He is enthroned upon the cherubim; the earth gets distraught. 93:1; 18:8, 11; 80:2

²Great is Yahweh in Zion; he is high over all the nations. 48:2; Is 12:6; Ps 113:4

³May they give glory to your name, great and terrible: "Holy is he: ⁴this is the mighty King who loves justice." 111:9; 72:1-2

For you come, to install fairness; to establish, in Jacob, right and justice.

⁵Extol Yahweh, our God; worship at his footstool. Holy is he! And mighty! 132:7; Rev 15:4

⁶Among his priests were Moses and Aaron; and Samuel, among those who called on his name. They called to Yahweh, and he answered them. 1S 7:9; 12:18

19:18-19;
33:9;
Num 12:5 ⁷In the pillar of cloud he spoke to them; and they kept his statutes and the decrees he gave them.

34:6-7 ⁸O Yahweh our God, you responded to them; you were a patient God for them; but you punished their wrongs.

3:5;
Lev 19:2 ⁹Extol Yahweh our God; worship at his holy mountain. Holy is Yahweh our God!

PSALM 100 (99)

Praise to God, creator and shepherd.

66:1 ¹All you lands, acclaim Yahweh!

Dt 28:47 ²Serve Yahweh with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Dt 4:39;
32:6;
Eph 2:10;
Ps 95:7;
Ezk
34:31 ³Know that Yahweh is God; he created us, and we are his people, the sheep of his fold.

5:8;
118:19;
96:2 ⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.

Jer
33:11;
Ps 106:1;
117:2 ⁵For Yahweh is good; his love lasts forever; and his faithfulness, through all generations.

• **100 (99)** The psalm bids us rejoice in God, because we are utterly his. From the psalmist, the glad reflection provokes an outburst of gratitude. From those who know the Cross it should bring about a cry of wonder that God should have brought, what was already his own—that we should belong to him doubly. ‘You are bought with a great price,’ writes St. Paul; ‘not with gold or silver,’ Peter says, ‘but with the precious blood of Christ’ (1 Cor 6:20; 1 P 1:18). This psalm was born again on Calvary. We must remember that as we sing it!

PSALM 101 (100)

A pattern for rulers.

71:22 ¹I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O Yahweh, I will sing praise.

1Tim 3:4 ²I will walk the way of integrity—O Yahweh, when will you come to me? With a blameless heart, I will walk within my house.

139:21;
Jd 1:23 ³I will not set before my eyes anything that is base. I hate the deeds of faithless people; I will have no part in them.

Eph
5:11;
Pro
11:20 ⁴I will banish all wicked hearts; and evil I will not know.

Pro 21:4 ⁵He who deals with others treacherously, I will silence. He who talks and acts arrogantly, I will not endure.

119:63 ⁶I will choose from the faithful of the land, those who may dwell with me; only the upright shall be my servant.

26:4-5 ⁷No double-dealer shall live in my house; no one who utters falsehood shall stand before my eyes.

• **101 (100)** This was the prayer of the king, who was responsible for the moral welfare and material wellbeing of his people. Our Lord is the king of the Christian people: no sin was found in him, and he came to make it possible for all to share his own innocence. In union with him, we declare our resolution to spread the kingdom of justice and love—in our hearts first. He showed us the way, so that all of us choose the path of integrity. Jesus came to serve and wanted to be surrounded by servants (Mk 10:41-45) while he proclaimed a blessing to the poor and the persecuted ones (Mt 5:3, 10). This is a good psalm to face our responsibilities, in the church and in society.

⁸Each morning I will clear the land and silence all the wicked; I will uproot all the evildoers from the City of Yahweh. Pro 20:26; Rev 21:27

PSALM 102 (101)

142:3

Prayer for renewal: fifth psalm of repentance.

• **102 (101)** The psalmist experiences psychological and bodily disintegration. This pathetic expression of grief suddenly changes (v. 13) into a confident prayer for God's protection on Zion, his holy city. So, we suffer with all who suffer in the Church—while being certain, that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

The Lord indeed freed those condemned to death (verse 21) when Jesus cried out again in a loud voice and gave up His spirit (Mt 27:50). At that time, 'tombs were opened and several holy people who had died were raised to life' (Mt 27:52). Therefore, unlike the Psalmist who seems very hurt and afflicted, let us rejoice and give thanks and book our place in heaven.

In the face of social chaos and a premature death, we can pray with this psalm, ratifying our hope: 'Your servants' children will dwell secure' (v. 29).

²O Yahweh, hear my prayer; let my cry for help come to you. 39:13; 88:3

³Do not hide your face from me when I am in trouble. Turn your ear to me; make haste to answer me when I call. 69:18; 27:9; 31:3; 71:12; 56:10; 143:7

⁴For my days are passing away, like smoke; my bones burning, like a furnace.

⁵Like withered grass, my heart is blighted, and I forget to eat my bread. 90:6; Is 40:7

⁶Because of my great grief, I am reduced to skin and bones. 6:7; Job 19:20

⁷I am like an owl in the wilderness, like a vulture among the ruins.

⁸I awake moaning, like a lonely bird on the housetop.

⁹All day long I am taunted by my enemies; they use my name as a curse. 44:17

¹⁰The bread I eat is ashes, my drink is mingled with tears, ¹¹for your wrath, your fury; for you have thrown me aside. 42:4; 80:6

¹²My days are vanishing, like the shadows at night; I wither away, like grass. 109:23; 144:4; 103:15

¹³But you, O Yahweh, you sit forever; your name endures through all generations. 9:8; Lm 5:19; Ps 135:13

¹⁴Arise, have mercy on Zion; this is the time to show her your mercy.

¹⁵For your servants cherish her stones, and are moved to pity by her dust. Ne 2:3

¹⁶O Yahweh, the nations will revere your name, and the kings of the earth your glory,

¹⁷when Yahweh will rebuild Zion and appear in all his splendor. Is 60:1

¹⁸For he will answer the prayer of the needy and will not despise their plea.

¹⁹Let this be written for future ages, "Yahweh will be praised by a people he will form." 22:31-32

²⁰From his holy height in heaven, Yahweh has looked on the earth ²¹to hear the groaning of the prisoners, and free those condemned to death. 14:2; Dt 26:15; Ps 113:8; Is 63:15; 79:11

²²Then the name of Yahweh will be declared in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem,

Is 60:3-4 ²³when the peoples and the kingdoms assemble to worship him.

²⁴My walk has exhausted me, he has cut short my days.

Is 38:10 ²⁵I cry to him, "My God, do not take my life in mid-course; you, whose days are from age to age."

Is 51:6-8; Heb 1:10-12 ²⁶In the beginning you laid the earth's foundation; the heavens are the work of your hands.

Is 65:17; Rev 20:11; 21:1; 2P 3:10 ²⁷Although they perish, you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment; you change them like clothes: they pass away,

²⁸but you remain the same, your years unending.

69:37 ²⁹Your servants' children will dwell secure; their posterity will endure without fail.

PSALM 103 (102)

Praise of God's love.

104:1,35 ¹Praise Yahweh, my soul; all my being, praise his holy name!

103:8 ²Praise Yahweh, my soul, and do not forget all his kindness; ³he forgives all your sins and ⁴heals all your sickness; ⁵he redeems your life from destruction and crowns you with love and compassion; ⁶he gives fulfillment to your years, and renews your youth like the eagle's.

146:7 ⁷Yahweh restores justice and secures the rights of the oppressed.

Rom 3:2 ⁸He has made known his ways to Moses; and his deeds, to the people of Israel.

34:6-7; Ps 86:15; 145:8; Jas 5:11 ⁹Yahweh is gracious and merciful, abounding in love and slow to anger; ¹⁰he will not always scold nor will he be angry forever. ¹¹He does not treat us according to our sins, nor does he punish us as we deserve.

36:6; 117:2; Is 55:9 ¹²As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his love for those fearing him; ¹³as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove from us our sins.

Jer 31:20 ¹⁴As a father has compassion on his children, so Yahweh pities those who fear him.

90:3; Job 10:9 ¹⁵For he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

102:12; Is 40:6-7 ¹⁶The days of mortals are like grass; they bloom like a flower of the field;

• **103 (102)** The Christian lives joyfully in the paradox that our God is higher than the heavens, and yet, is close to us in love and mercy. Our gratitude for his mercy merges naturally into a hymn of praise, for his greatness. When we think how great he is, it is not to think how far away he is, but how much he loves us to come down to us.

God is a Father full of mercy. Is it necessary to quote a text from the New Testament? A good one is that of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32) or the prayer of Jesus on the cross (Lk 23:34 or Rom 8:31-34). They show us the depth of God's love, mercy and forgiveness. Let us praise the Lord, together with everything created: in moments of joy, as well as in hours of sadness, both when we have strength or when we live in fragility.

¹⁶but the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
his field will not see him again.

90:6;
37:36;
Job 7:10;
8:18

¹⁷But Yahweh's kindness is forever with those
who fear him; so is his justice, for their children's
children, ¹⁸for those who keep his Covenant and
remember his commands; for those who put
them into practice.

100:5;
Lk 1:50;
20:6
Dt 33:9

¹⁹Yahweh has set his throne in heaven; he
rules; he has power everywhere.

11:4;
22:29

²⁰Praise Yahweh, all you his angels, you
mighty ones who do his bidding; you, who obey
his word.

Dn 3:59;
Ps 148:8;
Lk 1:19

²¹Praise Yahweh, all his hosts, all his servants
who do his will.

148:2

²²Praise Yahweh, all his works; everywhere he
rules.

145:10;
Dn 3:57

PSALM 104 (103)

**God's boundless care for his creation: a psalm of
worship.**

• **104 (103)** Religion is not strictly an affair between God and our souls. We are part of the world which God also made and loves. The creation was described in the first chapter of Genesis in brief phrases. Here, the same account is painted in loving detail. The psalmist speaks of the world, as he saw it; we can think also of the world as we know it—a much more complex world than the psalmist knew—but with the same delight and awe.

In contemplating the universe, the believer feels full of admiration and optimism. All comes from God, and this universe is also for humankind. God is now completing his creation, through the work of humans and the radiant light of his witnesses: 'Send your Spirit to renew the face of the earth.' Not only does all come from God but all belong to him and speak of him. Atoms, nature, shapes and colors, everything is a radiation of his own riches: light is your cloak; the clouds, your chariot; the firmament, the tent of your dwelling. The beauty of the cosmos is the cloud that hides God's beauty. Even if today we have a scientific vision of the world, this Psalm, 2,500 years old, retains its value. The world we know is much vast,

¹Praise Yahweh, my soul!
Clothed in majesty and splendor;
O Yahweh, my God, how great you are!

103:22;
2S 7:22

²You are wrapped in light as with a garment;
you stretch out the heavens like a tent,

18:10

³you build your upper rooms above the waters.

Is 19:1;
Ps 18:11

You make the clouds your chariot
and ride on the wings of the wind;

⁴you make the winds your messengers,
and fire and flame your ministers.

Heb 1:7

⁵You set the earth on its foundations,
and never will it be shaken.

119:90

⁶You covered it with the ocean like a garment,
and waters spread over the mountains.

⁷But at your rebuke, the waters flee;
at the sound of your thunder, they take to flight.

⁸Brought to the mountains, they flow down
again

to settle in the valleys.

⁹You set a limit they could not cross,
never again to flood the earth.

Jer 5:22;
Gen 9:11

¹⁰You make springs gush forth in valleys,
winding among mountains and hills,

74:15;
Dt 8:7

¹¹giving drink to the beasts of the field,
quenching the thirst of wild donkeys.

¹²Birds build their nests close by,
and sing among the branches of trees.

Acts
14:17 ¹³You water the mountains from your abode
and fill the earth with the fruit of your work.

147:9;
Gen
1:30 ¹⁴You make grass grow for cattle
and plants for man to cultivate,
that he may bring forth food from the earth:
4:8;
Jdg
9:13;
Pro
31:7;
Gen
18:5 ¹⁵wine to gladden his heart,
oil to make his face shine,
and bread to make him strong.

¹⁶Yahweh waters his trees to their fill,
the cedars of Lebanon which he planted.

¹⁷The birds build their nests,
the stork has its home in the pine trees.

Pro
30:26 ¹⁸High mountains are for wild goats,
the cliffs a refuge for badgers.

74:16;
Gen
1:16 ¹⁹You made the moon to mark the seasons,
and the sun that knows when to set;

²⁰when you bring the darkness of the night,
all the beasts of the forest begin to prowl:
²¹the young lions, roaring for their prey,
claiming their food from God.

Job 37:8 ²²When the sun rises, the beasts steal away,
returning to rest in their dens.

²³Man then goes out to his work,
and toils till evening comes.

Job 5:9;
Pro 3:19;
8:22-31;
Jer
10:12;
51:15 ²⁴How varied O Yahweh, are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all—
the earth, full of your creatures.

²⁵Behold the sea, wide and vast,
teeming with countless creatures,
living things, both great and small,
²⁶a strange world reserved for the ships,
for Leviathan, the dragon you made to play with.

145:15;
136:25 ²⁷They all look to you
for their food in due time.

Lk 12:24 ²⁸You give it to them,
and they gather it up;
you open your hand,
they are filled with good things.

30:8 ²⁹When you hide your face they vanish;
you take away their breath, they expire
and return to dust.

33:6;
Gen 2:7;
Jdt 16:14 ³⁰When you send forth your spirit,

diverse and marvelous. How could we ever think that it has formed itself or that it is the product of an accident? God continually sustains every being and holds it in his hands. What would become of them should he, in an instant take away his Spirit? Just think what happens when there is a power failure—no longer is there light, energy, movement—it is as if the world ceased to exist.

The psalmist marvels at the wonders that God has created and how they live in absolute harmony. He reassuringly confirms that God is in charge and we have nothing to worry about. In fact, Jesus has told us repeatedly not to worry and cites as examples, 'Look at the birds in the air' (Mt 6:26) and 'Look at the flowers in the fields' (Mt 6:28).

All Jesus asks from us is to have faith—even faith, as little as a mustard seed. If only we could be filled with faith, we will be able to create wonders ourselves and allow miracles to be performed in our lives.

It is a good psalm for this time of ecological sensitivity, in which we live.

they are created,
 and the face of the earth is renewed.
³¹May the glory of Yahweh endure forever;
 may Yahweh rejoice in his works! Gen
1:31
³²He looks on the earth, and it quakes;
 he touches the mountain, and it smokes. 18:8;
144:5
³³I will sing to Yahweh all my life;
 I will sing praise to God while I live. 146:2
³⁴May my song give him pleasure,
 as Yahweh gives me delight. 19:15
³⁵May sinners vanish from the earth,
 and may the wicked be no more.
 Praise Yahweh, my soul!

PSALM 105 (104)

God's faithfulness to his promise: the story of Israel.

• **105 (104)** The psalmist summarizes in this one psalm the goodness and the greatness of God, as he knew it from The Old Testament. He connects with his past to seek God's presence and praise him. We do not live in isolation from our material environment, nor do we from our historical past, and the historical books of the Scriptures, like the Creation, provide material for praise. The child is father of the man, and we are what our past has made us. We are the people whom God has redeemed, but in redeeming us, God was keeping the promise which he made 'to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his seed.'

When praying with this psalm, we can unite our history to the history of salvation and remember that, while the covenant is a mandate, it is also the Word of God and therefore it is an eternal and holy covenant. If we are unfaithful, God is still faithful.

¹Give thanks to Yahweh, call on his name;
 make known his works among the nations. 16:8-22;
Ps 78;
Is 12:4;
Ps 9:12
²Sing to him, sing his praise, proclaim all his
 wondrous deeds. 9:2;
68:5;
Acts2:11
³Glory in his holy name; let those who seek
 Yahweh rejoice. 34:3;
40:17;
70:5
⁴Look to Yahweh and be strong; seek his face
 always. 24:6;
27:8;
Hos5:15
⁵Remember his wonderful works, his miracles
 and his judgments, 77:12;
111:4
⁶you descendants of his servant Abraham,
 you sons of Jacob, his chosen ones! Is 41:8
⁷He is Yahweh our God; his judgments reach
 the whole world. 100:3
106:45;
Dt 7:9;
Mic 7:20;
Lk 1:72
⁸He remembers his Covenant forever, his
 promise to a thousand generations, ⁹the Cov-
 enant he made with Abraham, the promise he
 swore to Isaac. Gen
26:3;
Sir
44:22
¹⁰He confirmed his decree to Jacob; to Israel,
 his eternal Covenant: Is 24:5
¹¹"To you, I will give the land of Canaan as
 part of your inheritance." Gen
28:13;
Ps 47:5
¹²When they were few in number, strangers in
 the land, ¹³wandering from nation to nation, from
 one kingdom to another, ¹⁴he allowed no one to
 oppress them; and for their sake, he rebuked
 kings: Dt 7:7;
26:5
Gen23:4;
Heb
11:13
¹⁵"Touch not my anointed ones," he warned,
 "do my prophets no harm!" Gen 12:
10-20
¹⁶Then he sent a famine and ruined the crop Gen
41:54

Gen 45:5; Acts 7:9 that sustained the land; ¹⁷he sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave;

Gen 41:9-13; Wis 10:14 ¹⁸his feet in shackles, his neck in irons; ¹⁹till what he foretold came to pass, and Yahweh's word proved him true.

Gen 41:39-44; Acts 7:10 ²⁰The king sent for him; set him free; the ruler of the peoples released him. ²¹He put him in charge of his household and made him ruler of all his possessions, ²²that he might train his princes and teach his elders wisdom.

Gen 46:6 ²³Then Israel came to Egypt; Jacob settled in the land of Ham. ²⁴Yahweh made his people fruitful and much stronger than their foes; ²⁵whose hearts he turned, to hate his people, to deal deceitfully with his servants.

3:10; 4:14-16 ²⁶Then he sent Moses his servant and Aaron whom he had chosen.

78:43; Jer 32:20 ²⁷They performed his signs among them, his miracles in the land of Ham.

10:21-22 ²⁸He sent darkness to the land; but they rebelled against his words.

7:19-21; Ps 78:44 ²⁹He turned their waters into blood, causing their fish to die.

7:28; Ps 78:45 ³⁰Their land teemed with frogs, invading even the king's bedroom.

8:12-13 ³¹He spoke, and flies and gnats swarmed throughout the country.

9:13-35; Ps 78:47; Rev 8:7 ³²He gave them hail for rain, and lightning flashed over the land.

³³He blighted their vines and fig trees, shattered the trees in the countryside.

10:12-15; Ps 78:46; Jl 1:4 ³⁴He spoke, and locusts came; grasshoppers without number; ³⁵they devoured all the vegetation and the produce of the soil; ³⁶then he smote all the firstborn, the first fruits of their manhood.

Gen 15:14; 12:35-36 ³⁷He led Israel out of the alien land, laden with silver and gold, and none were left behind.

12:33; 15:16 ³⁸Egypt was glad when they departed, so filled were they with dread.

14:19-20; Ps 78:14 ³⁹He spread a cloud as covering; and fire, to give them light at night.

16:12-13; Ps 78:18; 27; Wis 16:2, 20 ⁴⁰They asked for food; he gave them quails; and fed them with bread from heaven.

17:6; Num 20:8-11; ⁴¹He opened the rock, and water gushed out, flowing like a river through the desert.

22:4; Lk 1:54-55 ⁴²For he remembered his promise to Abraham, his servant.

⁴³So he led forth his people with joy, his chosen ones with singing. 15:1-21

⁴⁴He gave them the lands of the nations, and let them take the fruit of others' toil, Dt 4:38; 6:11; Ps 78: 54-55

⁴⁵that they might keep his statutes and remain obedient to his laws. 78:7

PSALM 106 (105)

Ingratitude of man: the story of Israel.

• **106 (105)** It is not only praise that the remembrance of our past calls forth: the story of the Old Testament is a story of people's sin and God's mercy, and 'we have sinned like our ancestors' (v. 6). We join with our ancestors in confessing it. To have sinned is not fatal; but to fail to acknowledge it, is. This cuts us from the people of God, the people redeemed, the people of God's mercy. The words of the Psalmist in verse 4 are similar to the good thief recorded in Luke 23:42, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' This is a very powerful acknowledgement which brought instant results. It teaches us not to lose faith, even at the eleventh hour and in the very last minute. Jesus always answers our prayers now, as He did then in Luke 23:43, 'Truly, you will be with me today in paradise.'

With this psalm, we recognize ourselves sinners before God, sinners as our parents, and we expect to be saved by grace.

Alleluia!

¹Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, for his love endures forever. 107:1; 100:5; 118:1,29; 136:1; 16:34,41; Ezra3:11

²Who can count Yahweh's mighty deeds, or declare all his praises? Sir 18:4

³Blessed are they who always do just and right. 112; Is56:1-2; Jas 1:25

⁴Remember me, O Yahweh, when you show favor to your people; rescue me when you deliver them; ⁵let me see the triumph of your faithful; let me share the joy of your nation; and join your people in praising you.

⁶We have sinned like our ancestors; we have done wrong and acted wickedly. Jer 3:25

⁷When they were in Egypt, our ancestors had no regard for your wondrous deeds; they forgot the abundance of your love; they rebelled against the Most High by the Sea of Reeds. 78:11; Ne 9:17

⁸Yet he saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known. Ezk 20:9

⁹He rebuked the sea, and it dried up; he led them through the deep as on dry land. 66:6

¹⁰He saved them from hostility, freeing them from the hand of the enemy. 14; Lk 1:71

¹¹Waters covered their pursuers, and none of them was left alive. 14:28

¹²Then they believed his promises and all at once sang his praises. 14:31; 15:1-21

¹³But soon they forgot his works and did not wait for his counsel. 95:9

¹⁴They gave way to wanton craving and tempted God in the desert.

¹⁵He gave them what they wanted, then sent them a wasting disease.

¹⁶In the camp they grew envious of Moses and Aaron, the holy one of Yahweh. Num 16

¹⁷So the earth opened, swallowed Dathan, Num 16:32

- Num 16:35; Heb 10:27 and buried the company of Abiram; ¹⁸fire broke out against them, burning up the wicked.
- 32:4 ¹⁹They made a calf at Horeb and worshiped the molten image.
- Jer 2:11; Rom 1:23 ²⁰They exchanged the glory of God for the image of a bull that eats grass.
- Di 32:18; Jer 2:32; Ps 78:42 ²¹They forgot their Savior God, who had done great things in Egypt, ²²wonderful works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by the Sea of Reeds.
- 105:27 ²³So he spoke of destroying them, but Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him to shield them from destruction.
- Di 9:25; 32:11; Ezk 22:30 ²⁴Yet they despised the promised land, for they had no faith in his word.
- Num 13:25—14:37 ²⁵They grumbled in their tents and would not listen to the voice of Yahweh.
- Num 14:2; Di 1: 25-28 ²⁶So he swore to them with his hand raised, that he would let them perish in the desert, ²⁷scatter their descendants among the nations and disperse them over the lands.
- Num 14:30 ²⁸They joined the rites of Baal-peor and ate sacrifices to lifeless gods.
- Num 25; Di 26:14; Tb 4:17 ²⁹Their deeds provoked Yahweh to anger, and a plague broke out among them.
- Num 25:7-8; Sir 45: 23-24 ³⁰But Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague came to an end.
- Num 25: 11-13 ³¹This was credited to his uprightness, making him remembered for all ages.
- 95:8-9; 17:1-7; Di 4:21 ³²Angered by them at Meribah's waters, Yahweh took it out on Moses, ³³for the rash words he uttered, when they rebelled against God.
- Is 63:10; Di 32:51; Num 20:12 ³⁴They dared not destroy the pagans, as Yahweh commanded; ³⁵they mingled with these nations and learned to do as they did.
- Jdg 3:5-6; Lev 18:3 ³⁶In serving the idols of the pagans, they were trapped ³⁷into sacrificing children to demons, ³⁸shedding the innocent blood of their sons and daughters to the idols of Canaan, polluting the country with blood. ³⁹They defiled themselves by what they did, playing the harlot in their worship.
- Jdg 2 11-13; 23 33; Lev 18:21; Di 32:17; Bar 4:7; 2K 16:3; 17:17; 1Cor 10:20 ⁴⁰The anger of Yahweh grew intense and he abhorred his inheritance.
- Jdg 2:14 ⁴¹He handed them over to the nations, and their foes ruled them with arrogance.
- Ne 9:27 ⁴²Brought by the enemy into subjection, they suffered the agony of oppression.
- Jdg 2: 16-17 ⁴³He delivered them many a time, but they

Jdg 1:
21-33;
Di 7:1, 16

Di 7:
16;
Wis
14:11

Is 57:5;
Jer 7:31;
19:4;
Ezk 16:20

34:16;
Jer
3:6-8;
Ezk
20:30

went on defying him and sinking deeper into their sin.

⁴⁴But he heard their cry of affliction and looked on them with compassion.

⁴⁵Remembering his Covenant, he relented for their sake, because of his great love. Lk 1:72

⁴⁶He let them be pitied by all those who held them captive. 1K 8:50; Jer 42:12

⁴⁷Save us, O Yahweh, our God, gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to you and praise your holy name. Dt 30:3; 2Mac 1:27; 16:35

⁴⁸*Blessed be Yahweh, God of Israel, from eternity to eternity. Let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise Yahweh!* 89:53; Lk 1:68

PSALM 107 (106)

God's inexhaustible love.

• **107 (106)** What we call 'redemption' comes to us in two stages—one already achieved but the other not yet, not till the end of our lives. We are a pilgrim Church, and we still have to pass through the desert (v. 4). We are still, in some degree, bound by the chains of sin (v. 10), and we have a stormy passage to make (v. 23). But the first stage of salvation is the guarantee of the second, and we pass through all this confident of God's protection (vv. 35-43).

The Gospels present situations similar to those described by the psalm: the hungry people fed by Jesus (cf. Mk 6:30-46); the chained and manacled person possessed by the devil in the sepulcher is liberated by Jesus (cf. Mk 5:1-20); various sorts of sicknesses are cured (cf. Mk 6:53-56 and 7:24-37); the storm is calmed (cf. Mk 4:35-41)... Whoever prays with this psalm will acquire wisdom, nourished by memory and unceasing meditation on the love that God shows us throughout history and life.

¹Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, for his love endures forever. 106:1; 100:5

²Let the redeemed of Yahweh say this, those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, ³those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south. 106:10; 106:47; Is 11:12; 43:5

⁴Some strayed in the wilderness and were lost, far away from the city. Dt 8:15; 32:10

⁵They wandered about hungry and thirsty, their lives ebbing away. Is 49:10; 41:17

⁶Then they cried to Yahweh in anguish, and he rescued them from their distress. 34:18; Hos 5:15; Is 63:9

⁷He led them by a straight way, to a city where they could dwell. Dt 6:10

⁸Let them thank Yahweh for his love and wondrous deeds for humans.

⁹He quenches the thirst of the soul and satisfies the hunger of the heart. 146:7; Lk 1:53

¹⁰They lived in the darkness of death, like prisoners suffering in chains, ¹¹for they rebelled against the word of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. Is 9:1

¹²Their backs bent in hard labor, they fell down; and there was no one to help.

¹³Then they cried to Yahweh in anguish, and he rescued them from their distress. 106:43

¹⁴He brought them out of the dark and gloom; and he tore asunder their bonds.

¹⁵Let them thank Yahweh for his love and wondrous deeds for humans.

Is 45:2 ¹⁶For he breaks open gates of bronze and batters down bars of iron.

¹⁷They were sick because of their wrongs; they were afflicted for their iniquities.

¹⁸Unable to take any food, they drew near the gates of death.

¹⁹Then they cried to Yahweh in anguish; and he rescued them from their distress.

²⁰He sent forth his word and healed them, and rescued them from destruction.

²¹Let them thank Yahweh for his love and wondrous deeds for humans.

50:14; Heb 13:15 ²²Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his deeds in joyful song.

Sir 43:24-25 ²³Those who went to the sea in ships, merchants on the mighty waters, ²⁴saw the marvels of Yahweh, his wonderful deeds in the deep.

²⁵For he spoke and stirred up a storm, whipping up the waves of the sea.

²⁶Flung upward and plunged to the depths, they lost courage in the ordeal; ²⁷reeling like drunkards, they were adrift, in spite of all their seamanship.

²⁸Then they cried to Yahweh in anguish; and he rescued them from their distress.

89:10; Lk 8:24 ²⁹He stilled the storm to a gentle breeze and hushed the billows, to silent waves.

³⁰How glad they were! He brought them safe and sound to the port where they were bound.

³¹Let them thank Yahweh for his love and wondrous deeds for humans.

22:23,26 ³²Let them extol him in the congregation, praise him in the assembly of the people.

Is 50:2 Dt 29:22-23 ³³He turned rivers into wastelands, flowing springs into parched grounds, ³⁴and fruitful valleys into salt-flats, because of the wickedness of their inhabitants.

114:8; Is 41:18 ³⁵Yet he also turned deserts into watersheds and parched land into flowing springs.

³⁶There, he let the hungry settle and found a city where they could dwell.

Am 9:13-15 ³⁷They planted vineyards, they sowed fields, and from them got fruitful harvests.

Dt 7:13 ³⁸By his blessing their numbers increased, and their herds and flocks did not diminish.

³⁹But then, they dwindled and were humbled through oppression, sorrow and distress.

Job 12:21,24 ⁴⁰And he who pours contempt upon princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes,

⁴¹rescued the needy from their affliction; and made their families flourish like flocks. 113:7;
146:7

⁴²The upright see it and are glad, but the wicked are silenced. 63:12;
Job
22:19

⁴³Let the wise consider all this and understand Yahweh's infinite love. Jer 9:11;
Hos
14:10

PSALM 108 (107)

Praise and Prayer for Victory.

• **108 (107)** A mixed psalm of trust and community supplication, composed by two halves of other psalms: Psalms 57:8-12, and 60:7-14 (2-6 and 7-14 respectively). Together, both pieces acquire a new meaning. The poet finds himself among peoples and nations, in diaspora. Despite his situation, he finds the strength to sing to the Lord with his whole being (2). He and the community harbor the expectation of a new day, illumined by the glory of the Lord. As a response to his morning song, the poet adds an old oracle (8-10). At the end, trust comes out strengthened (14). Our joy and confidence is not the wealth or wisdom or prestige of the Church, but simply the fact that God is with us. We can, in turn, update this psalm hearing in it the voice of a people, who plead in the midst of conflict and oppression.

²My heart is ready, O God! I will sing praise and make music. Awake my soul! 57:8-12

³Awake, harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn.

⁴I will thank you, O Yahweh, among the nations. I will sing praise to you among the peoples. 18:50

⁵For great is your love above the heavens; your faithfulness, beyond the skies. 36:6;
Is 55:9

⁶Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over the earth. 113:4

⁷Give help; and save us by your right hand, and rescue those you love. 60:7-14

⁸God has spoken in his Sanctuary: "In triumph I will divide up Shechem and parcel out the Valley of Succoth.

⁹Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet, Judah my scepter.

¹⁰Moab is my washbasin; upon Edom I cast my sandal; over Philistia I shout in triumph."

¹¹Who will take me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?

¹²O God! Have you really rejected us? You no longer go with our armies. 60:3

¹³Give us aid against the foe, for the help of mortals is not worth a straw. 118:8

¹⁴With God, we will gain victory; he will crush the enemy for us. 18:30;
44:6-9

PSALM 109 (108)

Appeal for help against vicious enemies.

• **109 (108)** The psalmist in his desperation seeks revenge it seems against those who have done him wrong. He is righteous but in the smallness of his human mind and heart, he finds it hard to forgive. Yet, he does them

¹Break your silence, O God, whom I praise, 28:1;
35:22

²now that the wicked and deceitful hurl their false accusations at me.

³They assail me with words of hatred; they attack me for no valid cause. 69:5

⁴They return my friendship with slander, and yet I pray for them.

35:12 ⁵They repay me evil for good; and hatred, for my love.

Zec 3:1 ⁶Appoint a wicked man against him; find an accuser to repeat this curse:

⁷“Let him be found guilty when tried; let his own plea condemn him.

Acts 1:20 ⁸May his days be numbered, his office be taken by another.

⁹May his children lose a father and his wife a husband.

¹⁰May his children go begging, driven out of their ruined homes.

Job 5:5 ¹¹May the creditor seize all his belongings and strangers plunder the fruits of his toil.

¹²Let no one extend kindness to him or take pity on his orphaned children.

Job 18:17, 19; Sir 41:11 ¹³May his posterity be destroyed, their names blotted out in the next generation.

Jer 18:23; Lm 1:22 ¹⁴May his father's evil be remembered before Yahweh; may his mother's sin never be effaced.

34:17 ¹⁵May their sins be ever before Yahweh, and their memory cut off from the earth.”

¹⁶For he did not remember to show kindness; but hounded the poor, the needy, and the brokenhearted to their death.

¹⁷He loved to curse; may he be cursed. He loathed blessing; may it be far from him.

Num 5:22 ¹⁸He wrapped himself in cursing; may it soak into his body like water, penetrate his bones like oil.

¹⁹May it be like a garment he wears, like the belt he ties around himself.

²⁰May Yahweh reward my accusers with this, and others who speak evil of me.

79:9; 106:6; Jer 14:7 ²¹But as for me, O God my Yahweh, for your name's sake, act on my behalf; deliver me, in the goodness of your love.

40:18 ²²For I am poor and needy; my heart is stricken within me.

²³Like an evening shadow, I fade away; like a locust, I am swept away.

²⁴My knees have become weak from fasting, my body is wasted of its substance.

22:7-8 ²⁵I have become the butt for the scorn of my foes; people shake their heads at me in derision.

70:2 ²⁶Help me, O Yahweh my God; and save me, for the sake of your love.

good and prays for them (vv. 4 and 5). The psalmist did not have the teachings of Jesus whose words would have brought him comfort, but we do. Therefore, we too could find ourselves in situations as expressed in verses 2 to 5 and not know what to do. However, in answer Jesus in Mathew 5:44 says, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.' These words may indeed be hard to digest but if we follow them, they will surely bring relief, comfort and peace to us at all times.

²⁷Let them know that this is your hand; that it is you, Yahweh, who do this. 71:13

²⁸They may curse, but you will praise; when they attack, they will be disgraced; but may your servant rejoice!

²⁹Let my accusers be clothed with dishonor; let them be wrapped in their own shame.

³⁰To Yahweh, I will give my thanks; I will praise him in the great assembly. 22:26

³¹He stands at the right hand of the needy, to save them from those who condemn them.

PSALM 110 (109)

The Messiah, king, priest and judge.

• **110 (109)** Sometimes we feel trapped, as if in prison, by the problems of life. This psalm is like a flash of lightning illuminating the prison and showing us an unexpected escape towards heaven. In spite of some obscure expressions, the overall meaning is clear: from Zion will come, the one who will be victorious over all the hostile powers (v. 5-6). The struggle will be hard, but God will finally ask him to sit at his right; and all will be subject to him. Our Lord is the Son of God.

We can pray with this psalm, evoking the political consciousness of authority. A Christian reading asks for the psalm, to be deprived of its violence. Christ is king and priest, but king 'of justice, love, and peace;' the priest who entered the sanctuary through his own blood and has opened up for us access to the sanctuary. Let us pray for the people of God, who are kingly and priestly people.

¹Yahweh said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand
till I make your foes your footstool."

²From Zion Yahweh will extend your mighty scepter;
and you will rule in the midst of your enemies.

³Yours is royal dignity
from the day you were born in holy majesty.
Like dew from the womb of the dawn,
I have begotten you.

⁴Yahweh has sworn,
and he will not take back his word:
"You are a priest, forever,
in the order of Melchizedek."

⁵The Lord is at your right hand
to crush the kings on his day of wrath.

⁶He will judge the nations,
heaping up corpses,
smashing heads on the wide plain.

⁷He has lapped up the water from the brook;
this is why he will lift up his head.

2:
Mt22:44;
Acts 2:
34-35;
Heb 1:13;
10:12-13;
1Cor
15:25;
1P 3:22

2:6, 9

Gen
14:18;
Ps
132:11;
Heb 5:6;
7:17, 21

2:9;
16:8;
Is 63:6

68:22

PSALM 111 (110)

The great works of God: an alphabetical psalm.

• **111 (110)** This is an alphabetical acrostic—each successive line begins with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It is only to be expected that there is not much logical development of thought. It is more a series of

¹*Alleluia!*
I thank Yahweh with all my heart
in the council of the just, in the assembly.

²The works of Yahweh are great
and pondered by all who delight in them.

138:1;
149:1

92:6;
139:14;
Rev 15:3

112:3;
Is 51:6 ³Glorious and majestic are his deeds,
his righteousness endures forever.

103:8;
112:4 ⁴He lets us remember his wondrous deeds;
Yahweh is merciful and kind.

105:8 ⁵Always mindful of his Covenant,
he provides food for those who fear him.

Jer 27:5 ⁶He shows his people the power of his arm
by giving them the lands of other nations.

19:8;
93:5 ⁷The works of his hands are faithful and just,
trustworthy are all his precepts,

Is 40:8;
Ps 19:10 ⁸ordained to last forever,
bearers of truth and uprightness.

Lk 1:68;
Ps
105:10;
Dt 28:58;
Lk 1:49 ⁹He has sent his people deliverance
and made with them a Covenant forever.
His holy name is to be revered!

Job
28:28;
Pro 9:10;
Sir 1:16 ¹⁰The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of
wisdom;
prudent are those who live by his precepts.
To him belongs everlasting praise.

PSALM 112 (111)

The generous and upright man: an alphabetical psalm.

1:1-2;
128:1;
Sir 34:14 ¹*Alleluia!*
Blessed is the one who fears Yahweh,
who greatly delights in his commands.

25:13;
102:29 ²His children will be powerful on earth;
the upright's offspring will be blessed.

111:3, 5;
Pro 3:16 ³Wealth and riches are for his family;
there, his integrity will remain.

Is 58:10;
Job
22:28 ⁴He is for the righteous a light in darkness;
he is kind, merciful and upright.

37:26;
Lk 6:35 ⁵It will be well with him who lends freely,
who leads a life of justice and honesty.

15:5 ⁶For the righteous will never be moved;
he will be remembered and loved forever.

⁷He has no fear of evil news,
for his heart is firm, trusting in Yahweh.

118:7 ⁸His heart is confident; he need not fear;
he shall prevail over his foes at the end.

2Cor 9:9 ⁹He gives generously to the poor;
his merits will last forever;
and his head will be raised in honor.

35:16;
1:6 ¹⁰The wicked will see this and be furious:

separate reflections on the idea of reverence, 'awe' and 'fear' for God (v. 10); but reverence for God who has saved us, bound himself to us in a covenant, and gives us food for soul and body. The great works and wonders that He performed revealed God's very self.

Praising God for everything is the ultimate word of creation, the final 'alleluia' to which we unite our voices, when we pray with this psalm: 'To him belongs everlasting praise.'

• **112 (111)** Another alphabetical psalm, developing the thought of the blessings received by those faithful to God: descendants, prosperity, virtue and salvation. It also deals with our reverence for God shown in practice—mainly, charity to our neighbor.

Indeed as the psalmist says in verse 4, 'He is for the righteous, a light in darkness....' For, in John 9:5 Jesus says, 'I am the light of the world.' We should therefore, never be in darkness. His guiding light will always be there for us whenever we need it, especially in our desperate days and when we are groping in the darkness of the night.

Our present society also needs witnesses, who fear God and are passionate lovers of his commandments. It needs men and women to reflect the rays of the Light because they are generous, compassionate, and attentive. Those who want to be witnesses of God in our time, can pray with this psalm.

they will gnash their teeth in seething envy.
The desire of the wicked will fail.

PSALM 113 (112)

To the God of glory and compassion: a psalm of worship.

• **113 (112)** The psalmist urges the people to offer praise to the Almighty Lord of heaven and earth. God calls them his friends, raising them up to his own height.

What distinguishes God from humans is not the infinity of his creation, but his way of being with us, his preference for what many despise. God likes to choose poor instruments, to achieve his great deeds of grace.

Our God does not remain isolated in heaven. He has come down to earth. He has become one of us, identified with those who are helpless. With the present psalm, let us exalt the Name of the Lord, great and sublime.

¹ *Alleluia!*

Praise, O servants of Yahweh,
praise the name of Yahweh!

² Blessed be the name of Yahweh
now and forever!

³ From eastern lands to the western islands,
may the name of Yahweh be praised!

⁴ Yahweh is exalted over the nations;
his glory above the heavens.

⁵ Who is like Yahweh our God,
who sits enthroned on high,

⁶ but also bends down to see
on earth as in heaven?

⁷ He lifts up the poor from the dust
and the needy from the ash heap.

⁸ He makes them sit with princes,
with rulers of his people.

⁹ He gives a home to the barren woman,
and makes her a joyful mother.
Praise Yahweh!

134:1;
135:1;
Dn 3:85

57:6;
97:9

35:10

11:4;
14:2;
102:20

1S 2:8;
Lk 1:52

Is 54:1

PSALM 114 (113 A)

The wonders of the Exodus: the one true God.

• **114 (113 A)** Our God is not a helpless idol. He is the living God—alive and in constant activity. That we are alive is the result of his action. As if the river were to run backwards, as if the solid mountains were to jump up and down—so astonishing it is that God should come to people, to make them share his life.

The exit from Egypt and the entrance into the Promised Land is the basic creed of Israel. With this hymn, we can celebrate the core of our faith: the passing, the Passover of the Lord. The wonders of God are also seen in Jesus, at the wedding feast in Cana where water was changed into wine in John 2:9 and in

¹ *Alleluia!*

When Israel came out of Egypt,
the family of Jacob,
from a people of foreign language,

² Judah became his Sanctuary;
Israel, his possession.

³ At his sight, the sea fled
and the Jordan retreated;

⁴ the mountains skipped like rams,
the hills frolicked like lambs.

⁵ Why is it, sea, that you flee?
Jordan, that you turn back?

⁶ Mountains, that you skip like rams?
Hills, that you frolic like lambs?

12:
15:17

29:6

96:9; 99:1 ⁷Tremble, O earth, at Yahweh's presence,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
105:41; 107:35; Dt 8:15 ⁸who turned the rock into a stream,
and the flint into a spring.

PSALM 115 (113 B)**God's people have no idols.**

Is 48:11; Ezk 36:22 ¹Not to us, O Yahweh, not to us,
but to your name be the glory;
for the sake of your love and faithfulness.

79:10; 42:4 ²Why should the pagans say,
"Where is their God?"

135:6 ³There, in heaven, is our God;
whatever he wishes, he does.

135: 15-18; Is 44: 9-20; 46:6-7 ⁴Not so, the hand-made idols,
crafted in silver and gold.

Wis 15:15; Rev 9:20 ⁵They have mouths that cannot speak,
eyes that cannot see,

⁶ears that cannot hear,
noses that cannot smell.

⁷They have hands but cannot feel,
feet, but cannot walk;
neither can they make a sound in their throat.

Wis 14:8 ⁸Their makers will be like them;
so will all who trust in them.

135: 19-20; 130:7; 33:20 ⁹O Israel, trust in Yahweh;
he is your help and your shield!

Num 18:20 ¹⁰You, family of Aaron, trust in Yahweh;
he is your help and your shield!

22:24; 135:20 ¹¹You who fear Yahweh, trust in him;
he is your help and your shield!

¹²Yahweh remembers us and will bless us;
he will bless the family of Israel;
he will bless the family of Aaron;

Jer 31:34; Wis 6:7; Rev 11:18 ¹³he will bless those who fear Yahweh,
both the small and the great.

134:3; Gen 14:19 ¹⁴May Yahweh shower blessings,
on you and your children as well.

¹⁵May you be blessed by Yahweh,
Maker of heaven and earth.

¹⁶Heaven belongs to Yahweh,
but the earth he has given to humans.

6:6 ¹⁷It is not the dead who praise Yahweh,
for they have gone down to silence;

Mark 14:24, Jesus changed wine into His Blood. And to date the miracle continues to take place in the Eucharist.

• **115 (113 B)** This is a psalm of trust. The people exiled in Babylon do not have a Temple or sanctuary. Their God does not admit any figure or representation, and besides, it is a defeated God. The powerful Babylonian gods are there. Where is the God of Israel? It is urgent for God, to act for the honor of his Name (v. 1) and for the exiled whose faith has been injured. The answer is conclusive: our God is in heaven and has created the earth. Your gods are on earth, but they are nothing, as the seven negatives of verses 5-7 describe. Our God created and made us in his own image and likeness (Gen 1:26).

We must constantly denounce the idols of ordinary people, as well as the idols of those who pretend to be free of every prejudice. Here is a thought of the poet, Paul Claudel: "Blessed are you, O my God, who freed me from all the idols and who made me adore you alone, and not Isis or Osiris, or Justice, Progress, Truth, Divinity, Humanity, the Laws of Nature, of Art or of Beauty. And who has not permitted these things to exist, things that are not, or are the vacuum left by your absence. I know that you are not the God of the dead, but of the living. Lord, I have found you! The one who finds you no longer tolerates death."

"I believe in God, though I do not see him," a Jewish man wrote in the ghetto of Warsaw. In times that are hostile to faith, it is good for us to pray with this psalm.

¹⁸but it is we, the living, who praise Yahweh,
from now on and forever. 113:2

PSALM 116 (114–115)

Prayer of a person saved from death.

• **116 (114-115)** This psalm is a simple prayer of thanks to God, after an escape from death by sickness, accident or malice. It became part of the Hallel or 'Hymn of Praise' (Ps 113-118) sung at the Paschal supper. Our Lord, therefore, went to death with the words on his lips. 'After singing psalms of praise, they went out to the Mount of Olives' (Mt 26:30). But from him, the words receive new life. Unlike the psalmist, he does not ask to escape the snare of bodily death, rather, he defies and defeats it: 'it was impossible for him to be held by the power of death' (Acts 2:24). The prayer of his human soul is for the glory of his risen body. With the psalmist, we may recite the prayer after sickness, but with our Lord, we may gratefully use it on our deathbed, for 'He who raised Jesus Christ from among the dead, will also give life to your mortal bodies' (Rom 8:11).

We can pray with this psalm, when we have overcome mortal dangers or solved personal conflicts. It is good for everything to remain in the sphere of the love of God, in whom we believe.

¹ *Alleluia!*

I am pleased that Yahweh has heard
my voice in supplication,

²that he has not been deaf to me,
the day I called on him.

³When the cords of death entangled me,
the snares of the grave laid hold of me,
when affliction got the better of me, 18:5

⁴I called upon the name of Yahweh:
"O Yahweh, save my life!" J1 3:5;
Ps 6:5

⁵Gracious and righteous is Yahweh;
full of compassion is our God.

⁶Yahweh protects the simple:
he saved me when I was humbled.

⁷Return, O my soul, to your rest,
for Yahweh has taken care of you.

⁸He has freed my soul from death,
my eyes from weeping,
my feet from stumbling; Is 25:8;
Ps 56:14

⁹I will walk before Yahweh
in the land of the living.

¹⁰I have kept faith, even when I said,
"I am greatly afflicted." 2Cor
4:13

¹¹I have said in my dismay,
"To hope in humans is vain." 31:23;
Rom 3:4

¹²How can I repay Yahweh
for all his goodness to me? 13:6

¹³I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of Yahweh.

¹⁴I will fulfill my vows to Yahweh
in the presence of all his people. 50:14

¹⁵It is painful to Yahweh
to see the death of his faithful. 72:14

¹⁶O Yahweh, I am your servant,
truly your servant, your handmaid's son.
You have freed me from my bonds. 119:125;
143:12;
86:16;
Wis 9:5

¹⁷I will offer you a thanksgiving sacrifice;
I will call on the name of Yahweh. 107:22;
105:1

56:13; 18I will carry out my vows to Yahweh
Jon 2:10 in the presence of his people,
19 in the courts of the house of Yahweh,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

PSALM 117 (116)**World-wide call to praise God.**

Rom
15:11 ¹ *Alleluia!*

Praise Yahweh, all you nations;
all you peoples, praise him.

103:11; ² How great is his love for us!
100:5 His faithfulness lasts forever.

• **117 (116)** Less than a quarter of a psalm, but all is there: goodness (grace, favor) and fidelity (truth) that is the truth of God. We can pray with this psalm, keeping in our heart the ecumenical cause.

PSALM 118 (117)**Processional song of praise.**

106:1; ¹ *Alleluia!*
100:5;
136

Give thanks to Yahweh,
for he is good,
his loving kindness endures forever.

115:9-11; ² Let Israel say,
135: "His loving kindness endures forever."
19-20; Lk 1:50

³ Let the house of Aaron say,
"His loving kindness endures forever."

⁴ Let those who fear Yahweh say,
"His loving kindness endures forever."

4:2; ⁵ In anguish, I cried to Yahweh;
18:7, 20; he answered by setting me free.
120:1
27:1; ⁶ With Yahweh beside me, I need not fear.
56:12; What can humans do to me?
Is 51:12; Rom 8:31; Heb 13:6

⁷ Yahweh is with me, ready to help;
I can look in triumph upon my enemies.

⁸ It is better to take refuge in Yahweh
than to trust in the help of humans.

146:3 ⁹ It is better to take refuge in Yahweh
than to trust in the might of princes.

22:13 ¹⁰ All the nations surrounded me;
in the name of Yahweh I crushed them.

¹¹ They surrounded me on every side;
in the name of Yahweh I crushed them.

¹² Like swarms of bees, they encircled me;
but like burning thorns, they died down;
in the name of Yahweh I crushed them.

• **118 (117)** This psalm was sung when the processions entered the Temple of Jerusalem. The people and their leader alternated with the choir of the Levites. At the end, the priests gave Aaron's blessing (Num 6:22). What does Israel sing? Their thanksgiving to God who saves them from death or raises them; thanksgiving to God who chooses the poor and the despised of this world, to build his kingdom with them.

"The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone" (v. 22)—so our Lord, rejected by his people and raised up by God; and so the Church, made up of those whom God has raised from death to life, in union with the Risen Christ. The Church is the Temple of God, within which each of us sings our praise of God who has so loved us.

¹³I was pushed hard and about to fall,
but Yahweh came to my help.

¹⁴Yahweh is my strength and my song;
he has become my salvation.

15:2;
Is 12:2

¹⁵Joyful shouts of victory
are heard in the tents of the just:
“The right hand of Yahweh strikes mightily,
¹⁶the right hand of Yahweh is lifted high,
the right hand of Yahweh strikes mightily!”

98:1;
15:6;
Acts
2:33

¹⁷I shall not die, but live,
to proclaim what Yahweh has done.

¹⁸Yahweh has stricken me severely,
but he has saved me from death.

¹⁹Open to me the gates of the Just,
and let me enter to give thanks.

24:7-10;
Is 26:2

²⁰“This is Yahweh’s gate,
through which the upright enter.”

Rev
22:14

²¹I thank you for having answered me,
for having rescued me.

Is 28:16;
Zec 3:9;
4:7;

²²The stone rejected by the builders
has become the cornerstone.

Mt 21:42;
1P 2:4-8;
Eph 2:20;
1Cor 3:11

²³This was Yahweh’s doing
and we marvel at it.

²⁴This is the day Yahweh has made;
so let us rejoice and be glad.

²⁵Save us, O Yahweh, deliver us, O Yahweh!

²⁶Blessed is he who comes in Yahweh’s name!
We praise you from the house of Yahweh.

Mt 21:9;
23:39;
Jn 12:13;
Ps 129:8;
134:3

²⁷Yahweh is God; may his light shine upon us.

18:29;
Is 60:1;
Laz 23:40;
Ne 8:15;
2Mac
10:7

*With branches, join in procession
up to the horns of the altar.*

²⁸You are my God, and I give you thanks.
You are my God, and I give you praise.

99:5;
Is 25:1

²⁹Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!

PSALM 119 (118)

Love of God’s law: an alphabetical psalm.

• **119 (118)** This is a long alphabetical psalm composed of stanzas of eight lines each. In which each verse begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet (Aleph, Beth, etc.). There is no logical development of thought, just a series of independent reflec-

¹Blessed are they whose ways are upright,
who follow the law of Yahweh.

112:1;
128:1;
Lk 11:28

²Blessed are they who treasure his word and
seek him with all their heart.

³They do no wrong; they walk in his ways.

⁴You have laid down precepts to be obeyed.

⁵O, that my ways were steadfast in observing your statutes!

⁶Then, I would not be put to disgrace, having paid attention to all your decrees.

⁷I will praise you with an upright spirit when I learn your just precepts by heart.

⁸I mean to observe your commandments. O, never abandon me.

Pro 1:4 ⁹How can young people remain pure? By living according to your word.

¹⁰I seek you with my whole heart; let me not stray from your commands.

Dn 7:28; Lk 2: 19, 51 ¹¹In my heart I have kept your word, that I may not sin against my Yahweh.

¹²Praise to you, O Yahweh; instruct me in your statutes; ¹³that, with my lips, I may declare all your spoken decrees.

1:2 ¹⁴I delight in following your laws, more so than in all riches.

¹⁵I will meditate on your precepts and concentrate on your ways.

Rom 7:22 ¹⁶In your laws I will rejoice and will not neglect your words.

¹⁷Be kind to your servant, that I may live to follow your word.

¹⁸Open my eyes that I may see the marvelous truths in your law.

39:13 ¹⁹Do not hide your commandments from me, a wanderer on earth.

²⁰My soul is consumed with desire for your ordinances at all times.

²¹You reprove the accursed ones, who stray arrogantly from your commands.

²²Remove from me their scorn and contempt, since I have followed your precepts.

²³Although princes conspire against me, your servant will observe your decrees.

²⁴Your laws are my delight; my counselors, who uphold me.

44:26 ²⁵In the dust I lie prostrate; lift me up, as promised by your word.

²⁶When I explained my ways, you responded; instruct me, then, in your precepts.

²⁷Explain to me all your ordinances, and I will meditate on your wondrous deeds.

²⁸My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word.

tions, like ejaculations, meditating on various aspects of the same subject: the word of God. God's revelation of himself, which is also a revelation to us of the way we should live. This is a sapiential meditation centered on the Law. The author makes use of all the arts of the language, to confess his love to the Law. There are twenty-two stanzas, as many as the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza has eight verses, with eight synonyms of the Law. Number seven already indicates fullness. If one adds another unit (7+1), nothing more could be said; it is the perfect sum. The verses of each stanza start with the same letter. In such a way from the first letter to the last one of the Hebrew alphabet, all the human vocabulary is at the service of a love which exceeds any other love: the love of the Law of God, or better, the love of God of the Law. The reader meets in this psalm an uninterrupted succession of literary genres: meditations, petitions, short lamentations, declaration of trust and of innocence, acts of thanksgiving, praise, etc. God is the constant interlocutor of the psalmist; he addresses Him in the second person. The repetitions are inevitable. The literary art of acrostics will force some stanzas. We will meet some topical expressions, present in other psalms; but also passages of great literary beauty and high poetical inspiration. Many titles, symbols and privileges of this psalm are applied to Christ: Light, water of the rock, way. The great teaching/revelation (Torah) of God is Jesus. We can put his name where we read the law or its synonyms.

Paschal started his day praying with a stanza of this psalm. Thus he confessed his love to God. That is what the Church proposes to us in the Liturgy of the Hours: each day, halfway through work, it offers us a stanza of this psalm. With this stanza we proclaim our love to God of the Law, and his definitive Word: The Lord, who is the ratification of the divine promises.

This longest psalm in the Scriptures is inversely proportionate to the short human life of Jesus on earth. Jesus prayed and

repeatedly and even taught us how to pray. By his life on earth and his example, he showed us the way. He followed the path of righteousness enunciated all along in this psalm. In fact, in verse 36 when the psalmist says, 'Incline my heart to follow your will...' is a reminder of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane in Luke 22:42 'Father, if it is your will, remove this cup from me; however, not my will but yours be done.' Therefore, if we too follow the path of righteousness doing the will of God through our heart, mind and actions, we too will be rescued, no matter how difficult our burdens, we too will be with him in paradise (Lk 23:43).

²⁹Keep me away from deceitful paths; be gracious and teach me your law.

³⁰I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart upon your laws.

³¹Since I cling to your decrees, O Yahweh, save me from disgrace. Dt 11:22; Jer 13:11

³²I will run in the way of your commands, for you have freed my heart.

³³Explain to me, O Yahweh, your commandments, and I will be ever faithful to them.

³⁴Give me understanding, that I may observe your law with all my heart. Jer 9:23

³⁵Guide me in obeying your instructions, for my pleasure lies in them.

³⁶Incline my heart to follow your will and not my own selfish desire. Is 33:15

³⁷Turn my eyes away from vanities and direct them to your life-giving word.

³⁸Fulfill your promise to your servant, so that others may revere you.

³⁹Ward off the reproach I fear, for your law is good.

⁴⁰Oh, how I long for your precepts! Renew my life in your righteousness.

⁴¹Give me your unfailing love, O Yahweh; your salvation, as you have promised.

⁴²Strengthened by my trust in your word, I can answer my enemy's reproach. Mt 10:19

⁴³Take not the word of truth from my mouth, for I would also lose my hope in your word.

⁴⁴May I always keep your word, for ever and ever; ⁴⁵I shall walk in freedom, having sought out your laws. Ezra 7:10

⁴⁶I will proclaim your word before kings; and I will not be confused or ashamed.

⁴⁷For I delight in your word, which I fear. ⁴⁸I will lift up my hands to you, and meditate on your commandments. Jn 4:34; 28:2; 63:5

⁴⁹Remember your word to your servant; your word, which has given me hope. 105:42

⁵⁰My consolation in suffering is this: that your promise renews my life. 1Mac 12:9; Rom 15:4

⁵¹Although the arrogant mock me without end, I faithfully cling to your word.

⁵²When I remember your ordinances of old, I find comfort in them, O Yahweh.

⁵³I feel indignant at the wicked who have forsaken your law.

⁵⁴Your decrees are the theme of my song; in this, my place of exile.

63:7 ⁵⁵Each night I call on your name, O Yahweh, and renew my vow to keep your word.

Ecl 12:13 ⁵⁶This has been my practice; I have kept your precepts.

16:5 ⁵⁷You are my portion, O Yahweh; I have promised to obey your word.

⁵⁸With all my heart, I have sought your face; be gracious to me, according to your promise.

⁵⁹I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your paths.

⁶⁰I hasten and no longer delay in keeping your commands.

⁶¹The wicked have me trapped in their snares, but I have not forgotten your laws.

42:9 ⁶²At midnight I rise to praise you for the justice of your ordinances.

⁶³I am an ally for those who fear you, for those who keep your precepts.

33:5 ⁶⁴The earth is full of your love, O Yahweh! Teach me your decrees.

⁶⁵You have been good to your servant, Yahweh, in accordance with your words.

Jas 1:5 ⁶⁶Give me knowledge and good judgment, for I trust in your commands.

Pro 15:33 ⁶⁷Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.

⁶⁸You are good, and your works are good; teach me your decrees.

⁶⁹I am slandered by the arrogant, but I keep your precepts within my heart.

17:10; Is 6:10 ⁷⁰Their hearts have become dull; but I delight in your laws.

⁷¹It is good for me to have been afflicted, for I have deeply learned your statutes.

19:11 ⁷²Your law is more precious to me than heaps of silver and gold.

Job 10:8 ⁷³Give me insight to know your commands, since I have been formed by your hands.

107:42 ⁷⁴Those who fear you will be glad, seeing that I hope in your word.

⁷⁵I know, O Yahweh, that your laws are just; and there is justice in my affliction.

⁷⁶ Comfort me then with your unfailing love, as you promised your servant.

⁷⁷ Let your mercy come, to give me life; for your law is my delight.

⁷⁸ Humble the arrogant who oppress me, as I meditate on your precepts.

⁷⁹ Let those who fear you, turn to me; they will understand your statutes.

⁸⁰ May my heart be blameless in your decrees, that I may not be ashamed.

⁸¹ My soul longs for your protection; your word is my hope of salvation.

⁸² I have kept watch for your promise. “When 101:2 will you comfort me?” I ask.

⁸³ I have become as dry as a wineskin; yet, I have not forgotten your statutes.

⁸⁴ How long must your servant endure? When 7:2 will you judge my persecutors?

⁸⁵ The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me, in 57:7 defiance of your law.

⁸⁶ Your law, indeed, is trustworthy; when they 33:4; 111:7-8 persecute me, help me.

⁸⁷ They have almost put an end to me on earth; and yet, I have not forsaken your precepts.

⁸⁸ In your kindness, give me life; that I may keep your commands.

⁸⁹ O Yahweh, your word stands forever, firmly Is 40:8 fixed in the heavens.

⁹⁰ Your faithfulness lasts throughout the ages— 104:5 as long as the earth you created.

⁹¹ Your ordinances last to this day, for all things Jer 33:25 are made to serve you.

⁹² If your law had not been my pleasure, I would have perished in affliction.

⁹³ Never will I forget your precepts; for with them, you give me life.

⁹⁴ Save me, for I am yours, since I seek your 100:3 statutes.

⁹⁵ The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I look to your word for salvation.

⁹⁶ I saw that all perfection is limited, but your Sir 24:29 command is boundless.

⁹⁷ How I love your law, meditating on it all day!

⁹⁸ Your command—mine forever—has made Dt 4:6 me wiser than my enemy.

⁹⁹ I have more insight than my teachers, for I meditate on your decrees.

Wis 8:10 ¹⁰⁰I have more understanding than the elders,
for I abide by your precepts.

¹⁰¹I turn my feet from evil paths, that I may
keep step with your word.

¹⁰²I have not departed from your decrees, for
you, yourself, have instructed me.

19:11 ¹⁰³How sweet are your promises to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!

¹⁰⁴Your precepts have given me knowledge,
and I hate all that is false.

Pro 6:23 ¹⁰⁵Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light for
my path.

¹⁰⁶I have taken an oath, to keep your just
commands.

70:6 ¹⁰⁷I have suffered much, O Yahweh; renew my
life according to your word.

¹⁰⁸Accept my offerings of praise, O Yahweh,
and teach me your decrees.

¹⁰⁹I am ready to sacrifice my life for your law,
that is always in my heart.

¹¹⁰Though the wicked have laid a snare for
me, I do not stray from your precepts.

Jer 15:16 ¹¹¹Your statutes are my heritage, forever; they
are the joy of my heart.

¹¹²From age to age, I am determined to fulfill
your decrees until the end.

Sir 2:12 ¹¹³I detest double-dealing people; but I trea-
sure your law.

3:4 ¹¹⁴You are my shield, my refuge; my hope is
in your word.

6:9 ¹¹⁵Leave me, you evildoers; let me keep the
commandments of my God.

¹¹⁶May your promise uphold me, that I may
live; let me not hope in vain.

¹¹⁷Support me and I shall be safe, and faith-
fully keep your decrees.

¹¹⁸You spurn all who stray from your decrees,
for vain is their deceit.

¹¹⁹You discard all the wicked, as dross; that is
why I love your statutes.

¹²⁰My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in
awe before your laws.

¹²¹I have done what is just and right; do not
leave me to my oppressors.

¹²²Guarantee the well-being of your servant;
let not the arrogant oppress me.

¹²³I strain my eyes, searching your saving

help, watching, for the fulfillment of your just promise.

¹²⁴Treat your servant with compassion, and instruct me in your decrees.

¹²⁵Give me knowledge; I am your servant, who desires to understand your statutes. 116:16; 143:12

¹²⁶It is time for you, O Yahweh, to act, for they have broken your law. 69:14; 102:14

¹²⁷I love your commandments more than gold—the finest gold.

¹²⁸Because my steps are guided by your precepts, I hate all false ways.

¹²⁹Wonderful are your decrees; my soul cannot but keep them.

¹³⁰As your words unfold, light is shed, and the simple-hearted understand. 19:9

¹³¹I gasp in ardent yearning, for your commandments that I love.

¹³²Turn to me, then, and be gracious, as to those who love your name. 25:16

¹³³You promised to direct my steps; free my path from evil.

¹³⁴Rescue me from human oppression, and help me keep your precepts. Is 54:14; Lk 1:74

¹³⁵Favor me with your smile and teach me your statutes. 31:17

¹³⁶My eyes shed streams of tears for those who disobey your law. Jer 13:17

¹³⁷O Yahweh, you are just, and your judgments right. Dt 32:4; Psv 16:7; 19:2

¹³⁸You have pronounced your decrees in justice and faithfulness.

¹³⁹I burn with zeal, seeing how my foes ignore your words. 69:10

¹⁴⁰Your promises have been tested; therefore, your servant loves them.

¹⁴¹Though I am lowly and despised, I do not forget your precepts.

¹⁴²Your justice is eternal and your law is true.

¹⁴³In calamity and in anguish, your ordinances are my delight.

¹⁴⁴Your statutes are just, forever; give me understanding, that I may live.

¹⁴⁵I call with all my heart; answer me, O Yahweh: help me keep your statutes. Wis 8:21

¹⁴⁶I call upon you, save me; and I will do your will.

¹⁴⁷Before dawn I rise and cry for help; all my hope is in your word. 57:9

¹⁴⁸I lie awake through the night, to ponder on your promises.

¹⁴⁹Hear my voice, in your unfailing love; in your justice, O Yahweh, preserve my life.

¹⁵⁰My persecutors close in with evil intent; they are far from your law.

¹⁵¹But you, O Yahweh, are near, and all your commandments are true.

¹⁵²Long have I known, that your decrees were founded to last forever.

¹⁵³Look upon my suffering and rescue me, for I have not forgotten your law.

¹⁵⁴Plead my cause and redeem me; and, as you promised, give me life.

¹⁵⁵Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes.

¹⁵⁶Great is your compassion, O Yahweh; renew my life, according to your word.

¹⁵⁷Many foes persecute me, but I have not turned away from your law.

¹⁵⁸I look upon the faithless with loathing, because they do not obey your ruling.

¹⁵⁹See how I love your precepts; give me life, O Yahweh, in your kindness.

¹⁶⁰The essence of your word is truth, everlasting are your just ordinances.

¹⁶¹Rulers persecute me for no cause; yet, my heart stands in awe of your words.

¹⁶²Your word filled me with joy: I found there, great riches.

¹⁶³I hate and abhor falsehood, but I love your law.

¹⁶⁴Seven times a day I praise you, for your just ordinances.

¹⁶⁵Lovers of your law have found great peace; nothing can make them stumble, not even distress.

¹⁶⁶O Yahweh, I wait for your salvation, and I keep your commands in faith.

¹⁶⁷My soul clings to your words, for I truly cherish them.

¹⁶⁸I obey your precepts and your decrees; my ways are always before you.

¹⁶⁹Let my cry come to you, O Yahweh; give me understanding, according to your word.

¹⁷⁰May my prayer come before you; rescue me, as you have promised.

¹⁷¹Let my lips overflow with praise, for you teach me your decrees.

¹⁷²Let my tongue sing of your good news, for all you say is true. Rom 7:12

¹⁷³Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts.

¹⁷⁴I long for your salvation, O Yahweh; I delight in your law.

¹⁷⁵Long may I live, to sing your praise, may your ordinances always be my help!

¹⁷⁶Like a stray sheep, I wandered about— come, and look for your lost servant. See that I have not forgotten your commands. Is 53:6; Ezk 34:6; Lk 15:4; 1P 2:25

PSALM 120 (119)

Among treacherous strangers: a pilgrimage song.

• **120 (119)** First of the 'Psalms of Ascent' (Ps 120 to 134) sung by pilgrims, journeying to the holy hill of Zion. Compared with this sacred ground, the whole world is barbarous. But the psalm must be transposed to the Christian key: the spirit of the New Testament is of another sort. 'Pray for them that calumniate you' is our Lord's instruction (Mt 5:43ff). We acknowledge no enemy, but of the soul. We pray that God will rain down his destroying judgments upon our enemy within: deceitful, treacherous, waging constant war. We pray against our own selfish selves.

¹I called to Yahweh in my distress, and he answered me. 34:7; 86:7; 118:5; Jon 2:3

²Deliver me, O Yahweh, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues. 31:19; Sir 51:2

³How shall he pay you back, O deceitful and lying tongue? 109:2

⁴He will punish you, with arrows hardened over the glowing coals!

⁵Woe is me, who lives with barbarians, and dwells amid plunderers. 109:5

⁶My soul is sick of dwelling among those who hate peace;

⁷I want peace, but they only think of quarrels.

PSALM 121(120)

God the protector: a pilgrimage song.

• **121 (120)** The pilgrim lifts his face toward the Temple on the height of Zion. It is the earthly home of the one God, tireless guardian of Israel. We, too, journey 'to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem' with which the old Jerusalem of stone, cannot compare. 'We have here no lasting city and we are looking for the one to come' (Heb 13:14).

God is faithful, he watches by day and by night. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus accompanies them but they do not recognize him. 'If God is with us, who could be against us?' Prayer for the beginning of a difficult task:

¹I lift up my eyes to the mountains— from where shall come my help? 123:1; 133:3; 3:5; 20:3

²My help comes from Yahweh, maker of heaven and earth. 124:6; 134:3

³Will he let your foot slip, the one watching over you? Will he slumber? 66:9

⁴No, the guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. 1K 18:27

⁵Yahweh is your guardian; Yahweh is at your side; and you, in his shade; 91:1; Is 25:4; Lk 1:35; Ps 16:8; 109:31

⁶Sunstroke will not be for you by day, nor the spell of the moon, by night. Rev 7:16

- 41:3; 97:10 ⁷Yahweh guards you from every evil;
he will protect your life.
- Dt 28:6; Ps 125:2; 131:3 ⁸Yahweh watches over your coming and going,
both now and forever.

PSALM 122 (121)

Greeting to Jerusalem: pilgrimage song.

- 27:4; 42:5 ¹I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of Yahweh!”
- ²And now we have set foot
within your gates, O Jerusalem!
- 48; 13-14 ³Jerusalem, just like a city,
where everything falls into place!
- ⁴There, the tribes go up,
the tribes of Yahweh, the assembly of Israel,
to give thanks to Yahweh’s name.
- 1K 7:7; 19:8 ⁵There stand the courts of justice,
the offices of the house of David.
- ⁶Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May those who love you prosper!
- ⁷May peace be within your walls
and security within your citadels!”
- ⁸For the sake of my relatives and friends
I will say, “Peace be with you!”
- 26:8 ⁹For the sake of the house of our Yahweh,
I will pray for your good.

PSALM 123 (122)

Cry for help: a pilgrimage song.

- 121:1; Mt 5:34; 6:9 ¹To you, I lift up my eyes;
to you, whose throne is in heaven.
- 25:15; 141:8; 145:15 ²As the eyes of servants look
to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of maids look
to the hand of their mistress,
so our eyes look to Yahweh our God,
till he shows us his mercy.
- 44; 14-17 ³Have mercy on us, O Yahweh,
have mercy on us;
for we have our fill of contempt.
- Pro 16:18 ⁴Too long have our souls been filled
with the scorn of the arrogant,
with the ridicule of the insolent.

a conversion, a vocation, the beginning of a family, risks taken for the good of all.

• **122 (121)** Joy of the pilgrim who reaches his goal at last—Jerusalem, elected home of God, venerable in the tradition of Israel. Here is a deep sense of homecoming and of pride in that home. We of the world-wide ‘Israel of God’ have no city to house us all; we are ‘of the household of the faith’ (Gal 6:10). But we have the brothers and sisters whom Jesus promised to those in his company (Mk 9:30); we have a home which we call ‘the Church.’ It stands scarred with years of siege but, by God’s grace, compact and dignified by the marks of resistance. We may take pride in it because the strength of its walls is from God. It will never have peace from without; let us pray and work for its peace within, which is ‘the love of brethren.’

• **123 (122)** The exiles returned from Babylon to a ruined city and a neglected land. This short hymn expresses the trust that upheld this ‘remnant of Israel.’ The mute appeal of the ‘eyes’ marks the simplicity of the psalm. It is so simple, indeed, that it would scarcely seem to need adapting to a true Christian heart. The eyes that we turn to God are the eyes of a child sure that it is loved, they are not the eyes of an anxious servant. Bidding us say: ‘Father!’ our Lord would have us think of ourselves, as children. Let us sing this psalm like a child.

• **124 (123)** Our adversary, the devil, goes around like a roaring lion: like a man swept away by a flood, like a child in a trap. How helpless we are, how lost—except for God!

'If God is for us, who can be against us?' Paul asks (Rom 8:31). When we live at the limit of our smallness, the liberator of our life arises: God as helper. He sustains us. We give thanks to him.

With admiration and gratitude, the people of God remember how they overcame their trials because God was with them. An invitation to give thanks! If we have not the heart to thank God, it is because we do not know how to discover the wonders in our own lives and in the world. It is strange that in the communities of the poor and the persecuted, the prayers of thanksgiving are interminable.

• **125 (124)** The pilgrims admire the walls of Jerusalem—high and reinforced. It is an image of God's protection. This prayer is for dark moments when we feel powerless in the face of injustice and organized violence, when faced with corruption and stupidity—perhaps, even in the Church. But the Church is built on a rock—rock-based and rock-girt. Our faith will be tested, but to leave this fortress is to abandon our only hope. The affectionate embrace of God to his people becomes a permanent presence of the Lord in his Church (Mt 28:20). Trusting in God, we can be sure even in the midst of conflict.

• **126 (125)** Israel's drought will turn to fertility. Her own labor of sowing will achieve its harvest. 'The field is the world' (Mt 13:38) and the field whitens for a harvest of souls gath-

PSALM 124 (123)

Thanksgiving for help in crisis: a pilgrimage song.

- ¹ Had not Yahweh been on our side—
let Israel say—
- ² had not Yahweh been on our side,
when people rose up against us,
- ³ then, they would have swallowed us alive;
such was their anger against us.
- ⁴ A bit more, and the flood would have engulfed us;
the torrent would have swept over us;
- ⁵ the raging waters would have swept us away.
- ⁶ Blessed be Yahweh,
who did not let us be devoured.
- ⁷ Like a bird, our soul escaped
from the snare of the fowler;
the snare was broken and we were freed.
- ⁸ Our help is in the name of Yahweh,
who made heaven and earth.

94:17;
129:1

35:25;
Jer
51:34;
Pro 1:12

32:6;
42:8;
69:2-3;
Is 8:7-8

26:6;
31:22

91:3

20:8;
33:21;
Pro
18:10;
Ps
115:15;
121:2;
146:6

PSALM 125 (124)

Unshakable faith: a pilgrimage song.

- ¹ Those who trust in Yahweh
are like Mount Zion;
immovable, it stands forever.
- ² As mountains surround Jerusalem,
so Yahweh encompasses his people.
- ³ The scepter of the wicked will not remain
over the land allotted to the upright,
for then, the upright might be led
to put their hands to evil deeds.
- ⁴ Be good, O Yahweh, to those who are good,
to those who are upright in heart.
- ⁵ But those who turn to crooked ways,
Yahweh will drive out with the evildoers.
May peace remain upon Israel.

Pro
10:25

Dt 32:10;
Zec 2:9;
Mt 28:20

18:25-27

Mt 7:23

PSALM 126 (125)

Song of the returned exiles: a pilgrimage song.

- ¹ When Yahweh brought the exiles back to Zion,
we were like those moving in a dream.
- ² Then, our mouths were filled with laughter,
and our tongues with songs of joy.

14:7;
85:2

Job 8:21

Among the nations it was said,
 “Yahweh has done great things for them.”

³Yahweh had done great things for us,
 and we were glad indeed.

⁴Bring back our exiles, O Yahweh,
 like fresh streams in the desert.

Is 25:8-9;
Rev 21:4
⁵Those who sow in tears
 will reap with songs and shouts of joy.

Jer 31:3;
Is 65:19;
Bar 4:23;
Jn 16:20
⁶They went forth weeping,
 bearing the seeds for sowing,
 they will come home with joyful shouts,
 bringing their harvested sheaves.

PSALM 127 (126)

Success depends on God's blessing: a pilgrimage song.

It is useless spending all our days in search of security for the

Pro
3:5-6;
10:22;
Mt 6:
25-34;
Jn 15:5
¹Unless Yahweh builds the house,
 in vain, do its builders labor.
 Unless Yahweh guards the city,
 in vain does the guard stay awake.

Gen
3:19;
Mt 6:11;
Pro 3:
24-26;
Ecl 2:24
²It is in vain that you rise early
 and stay up late, putting off your rest,
 toiling for your hard-earned bread;
 God gives it to his loved ones, and they sleep.

Dt 28:11;
Pro 17:6;
Ps 128
³Sons are a gift from Yahweh;
 the fruit of the womb is a reward.

⁴Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
 are the sons of one's youth.

Job 29:5
⁵Blessed is the man who has filled
 his quiver with arrows of this kind,
 their foes will not silence them
 when they contend in court.

PSALM 128 (127)

The blessings of home: a pilgrimage song.

112:1 ¹Blessed are you who fear Yahweh
 and walk in his ways.

112:3 ²You will eat the fruit of your toil;
 you will be blessed and favored.

Pro 31;
Job
29:5;
Ps
144:12
³Your wife, like a vine,
 will bear fruits in your home;
 your children, like olive shoots,
 will stand around your table.

ered to eternal life (Jn 4:35ff; Mt 13:30). But the sowing is in tears: ‘Unless the seed falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone’ (Jn 12:24ff). The seed is the Word—the Word made flesh and crucified. The tears are his, the joys ours: ‘Yahweh has done great things for us!’ And yet we, too, have our crucifixion. If we want to turn suffering into hope, tears into songs, we can pray with this psalm.

• **127 (126)** Human anxiety offers an insult to God—and it is futile. House, food, family are all from God. Without him, one is homeless, starving, and barren. ‘Be not anxious, your Father knows you need all these things’ (Mt 6:25ff). Such early gifts, implicit objects of the psalmist prayer, are the frontier of his ambition. This Old Testament expression of trust will never lose its worth but the ambition of the New ranges wider and higher.

‘Without me you can do nothing’ we read in John 15:5. It is necessary for Christians to get involved in the building of the earthly city, without leaving God out of it.

• **128 (127)** A fellow to the previous psalm, developing the idea of its second part. With sound instinct, it asks God, for a Jerusalem of God-fearing, happy homes. Men and women have their own part in building it—our psalm complements its predecessor's emphasis upon God's prevailing work. But what is Jerusalem to us? The new Jerusalem for which

we pray is 'the Church of the firstborn' (Heb 12:23). In her, the promises of the Old Testament are fulfilled and its prayers made sublime: it is around 'the table of the Lord' that the Spouse of Christ seats her ever-growing family (1 Cor 10:21; Eph 5:32). Pray God for the happiness and peace of his family.

⁴Such are the blessings bestowed upon the man who fears Yahweh.

⁵May Yahweh praise you from Zion. May you see Jerusalem prosperous all the days of your life.

⁶May you see your children's children, and Israel at peace!

134:3;
20:3;
122:9;
Gen
50:23;
Job
42:16;
Pro 17:6

125:6

PSALM 129 (128)

From its youth, the people of God were persecuted.

• **129 (128)** A field of ripe corn, a rich harvest—this is a good picture of God's bounty to us: but the harvest is brought forth after painful plowing.

Because our brothers and sisters are still oppressed, we must pray this psalm.

¹How they have oppressed me from my youth—
let Israel say, 124:1

²how they have oppressed me from my youth—
they have not put me down. 118:13;
Jn 16:33

³Upon my back, plowers have plowed
long and deep furrows 1s 51:23

⁴But Yahweh, who is just,
has shattered the yoke of the wicked. 35:4;
40:15

⁵May all who hate Zion
be thrown into confusion.

⁶May they be like grass in the garden,
which withers before you uproot it. 1s 37:27

⁷No reaper sets his hands on it,
no one gathers it to fill his arms,

⁸nor says of them the passersby,
"The blessing of Yahweh be upon you!"
We praise you in the name of Yahweh! 118:26

PSALM 130 (129)

Prayer of repentance and trust: sixth psalm of repentance.

• **130 (129)** The psalmist, aware of his people's faithfulness, is equally sure of God's answer to repentance (cf. Neh 1:7-9). Israel was still waiting, when Simeon took the child in his arms and said: 'My eyes have seen your salvation' (Lk 2:30). He held the infant Son of Man, who came to give his life for the redemption of many (Mk 10:45)—'with the Lord, fullness of redemption.' But since this has come, how can we Christians still await it? How can we sing the psalm? Because, though called, we are not yet chosen, though heirs, we do not yet enjoy the inheritance. Out of

¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O Yahweh, 18:5-7;
69;
Jon 2:3;
Lm 3:55

²O Yahweh, hear my voice!
Let your ears pay attention
to the voice of my supplication. 5:2-3;
55:2-3;
6:40;
7:15;
Ne 1:6

³If you should mark our evil,
O Yahweh, who could stand? Job 9:2;
Nh 1:6

⁴But with you, is forgiveness,
and for that, you are revered. Mic 7:18;
34:7;
1K 8;
39-40

⁵I waited for Yahweh, my soul waits;
and I put my hope in his word. 56:5;
119:81

⁶My soul expects Yahweh
more than watchmen, the dawn. 1s 21:11;
26:9

Is 30:18;
Ps 68:21;
86:15;
100:5;
103:8

⁷O Israel, hope in Yahweh,
for with him, is unfailing love
and with him full deliverance.

25:22;
Mt 1:21;
Col 2:14;
Tit 2:14

⁸He will deliver Israel
from all its sins.

PSALM 131 (130)

Song of serenity.

Mic 6:8;
Ps 139:6

¹O Yahweh, my heart is not proud
nor do I have arrogant eyes.
I am not engrossed in ambitious matters,
nor in things too great for me.

Mt 18:3;
Hos 11:4;
Is 66:
12:13

²I have quieted and stilled my soul,
like a weaned child, on its mother's lap;
like a contented child is my soul.

³Hope in Yahweh, O Israel,
now and forever.

PSALM 132 (131)

God's promise to David: a pilgrimage song.

Gen 49:24

¹Remember David, O Yahweh, and all his
readiness; ²how he swore an oath to Yahweh, to
the Mighty One of Jacob.

2S 7:1-2;
2S 2

³"I will not enter my house nor get into my bed;

⁴I will give no sleep to my eyes, no slumber
to my eyelids; ⁵until I find a place for Yahweh,
a dwelling, for the Mighty One of Jacob."

1S 7:1;
2S 6:2

⁶Then came the news, "The Ark is in Ephrata,
we found it in the fields of Jaar."

99:5

⁷Let us go to where he dwells and worship at
his footstool!

Num 10:35;
Ps 68:2;
64:1-42

⁸Arise, O Yahweh, and come to your rest;
you, and the Ark of your might.

⁹May your priests be arrayed in glorious man-
tle; may your faithful ones shout in gladness.

¹⁰For the sake of your servant, David, do not
turn away the face of your Anointed.

110:4;
2S 7:
12-16;
17:11-14;
Ps 89:20;
Acts 2:30

¹¹Yahweh swore to David a promise, and he
will remain true to it: "I will keep your descen-
dants on your throne,

¹²if your sons keep my Covenant and the
decrees I have taught them; their sons, too, will
sit forever upon your throne."

68:17

¹³For Yahweh has chosen Zion; he has desired
it for his dwelling;

these depths, our call must be
constant and, if it is constant, it
may be confident also. And there
are some whose waiting is a puri-
fying fire. This, more than any
other, is their psalm.

• **131 (130)** A perfect expres-
sion of the childlike trust and
peace which should be the atti-
tude of the children of God! But,
not one that is achieved without
effort—I have quieted and stilled
my soul' (v. 2).

The prayer of Charles de Fou-
cauld, "Father, I place myself in
your hands," is a beautiful para-
phrase of this psalm.

• **132 (131)** Our Lord, our
King, came to bring God to earth.
For this, he labored unwearily,
with sweat and even with blood.
And the result of his work was
not a building, a Temple; but the
Church, where God really dwells,
eternally.

Verse 11 is quoted in Acts
2:30; verse 5 in the speech of
Stephan (cf. Acts 7:45-47). The
psalm lends itself to accepting
the present reality, without for-
getting, that we are heirs to a
holy history. We pray this psalm,
in union with the Anointed One,
who is at the same time, the
Priest of the new Temple, built
on the body of the Lord.

The psalmist in verse 17
prophesied, 'From here a savior
shall come forth, a son of David.'
And these words came true when
in Luke 2:10, 'the angel said to
them, 'Don't be afraid: I am here
to give you good news, great joy
for all the people. Today a Savior
has been born to you in David's
town; he is the Messiah and the
Lord. Let this be a sign to you:
you will find a baby wrapped in
swaddling clothes and lying in a
manger.' The rest is history and
for all of us, the greatest story on

earth from whom we have the promise of eternal salvation.

¹⁴“This is my resting place forever; this I prefer; here, will I dwell.

¹⁵I will bless its fruits, its bread; and the poor will be satisfied.

¹⁶I will clothe its priests with glory; and its faithful will sing in gladness.

¹⁷From here, a savior shall come forth, a son of David; here, shall shine forever, the lamp of my Anointed.

¹⁸In shame will I clothe his enemies, but upon his head a crown shall shine.”

6:41;
Is 61:10;
Jer
31:14
Ezk
29:21;
Is 11:1;
Jer
33:15;
Zec 3:8;
Lk 1:69

PSALM 133 (132)

The blessing of unity: a pilgrimage song.

• **133 (132)** A psalm with wisdom tones! It celebrates the beauty of fraternity. Fraternity is a blessing that is life and lasting life. We Christians are brothers and sisters. Our mission is to spread the good perfume of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 2:14-15). We pray with this psalm and dream of a fraternity at home, in the community and in the whole world. We are all children of the only God and Father.

¹How good and delightful to see kindred living together in unity!

87

²It is like precious oil poured upon Aaron's head, running down his beard onto the collar of his robes.

30:25, 30

³It is like the dew of Hermon coming down the mountains of Zion, where Yahweh confers his blessing: life everlasting.

Hos
14:6;
Dt 28:8;
30:20;
Ps 36:10

PSALM 134 (133)

Prayer at nighttime: a pilgrimage song.

• **134 (133)** At times, Jesus spent the whole night in prayer. Jesus went up a hill, to pray alone. We can think of our companions who work during the night, of those who are sick and cannot sleep, so that their work, their fatigue, their sufferings, may be a song of praise to the Lord.

¹Come, praise Yahweh, all you servants of Yahweh, who minister by night in the house of Yahweh, in the courts of the house of our God.

135:1-2

²Raise your hands to the Sanctuary and praise Yahweh.

141:2;
Is 30:29;
9:33;
23:30

³May Yahweh praise you from Zion; he, who made heaven and earth.

128:5;
118:26;
Num
6:24

PSALM 135 (134)

Anthology of praise.

• **135 (134)** God, the living God, has cast out the prince of this world, has broken the power of the kingdom of evil, and formed for himself a holy nation, a kingdom of priests.

¹*Alleluia!*

134:1;
113:1

Praise the name of Yahweh. O servants of Yahweh, ²praise him, you, who serve in the house of Yahweh, in the courts of the house of our God.

³Praise Yahweh, for he is good; praise his name, for it is beautiful;

33:12; 19:5; Dt 7:6 ⁴for Yahweh has chosen Jacob as his own, Israel as his possession.

18:11; Ps 95:3 ⁵I know that Yahweh is great, that our Yahweh is above all gods.

115:3 ⁶Whatever Yahweh pleases, he does—in heaven and on earth, in the seas and in their depths.

Jer 10:13; 51:16 ⁷He raises clouds from the ends of the earth; he hurls down lightning with the rain; and from his vaults, he lets loose the wind.

136:10; 12:29 ⁸It was he, who killed the firstborn in Egypt, both people and beasts.

⁹It was he, who worked signs and wonders in your land, O Egypt; against Pharaoh and all his officers.

136:17-22 ¹⁰He destroyed mighty nations and slew powerful kings—

¹¹Sihon, king of the Amorites; Og, king of Bashan; all the kings of Canaan.

¹²He gave their land as an inheritance to Israel, his people.

102:13 ¹³Your name, O Yahweh, will endure forever; your renown, O Yahweh, throughout the ages.

Dt 32:36 ¹⁴For Yahweh vindicates his people and shows mercy to his servants.

115:4-6 ¹⁵The nations' idols are but gold and silver, the work of human hands.

¹⁶They have mouths that cannot speak, eyes that cannot see, ¹⁷ears that cannot hear; neither is there breath in their mouths.

115:8 ¹⁸Their makers will be like them; so will all who trust in them.

115:9-11 ¹⁹Praise Yahweh, house of Israel; praise Yahweh, house of Aaron; ²⁰praise Yahweh, house of Levi; praise Yahweh, all you who fear him.

²¹Blessed be Yahweh from Zion; he, who dwells in Jerusalem.

PSALM 136 (135)

Litany of praises: psalm of worship.

7:3 ¹*Alleluia!*

Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, his kindness endures forever.

Dt 10:17 ²Give thanks to the God of gods, his kindness endures forever.

³Give thanks to Yahweh of Lords, his kindness endures forever.

God shows his mercy each day, lets us know his Name. That is why we can continue the blessing initiated in the Temple of Jerusalem, praying with this psalm.

The psalmist is all praise for God, and encourages us to do likewise. Jesus in John 4:23 tells us to worship in spirit and truth for that is the kind of worship God wants. St. Paul tells us in Romans 12:2, 'You must discern the will of God, what is good, what pleases, what is perfect.' If we are true disciples of Christ, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free (Jn 8:32).

• **136 (135)** A 'Te Deum' to the master of creation who delivers the people he has chosen. Egypt felt his power, Sihon of the Transjordanian mountains, Og of the further north. By their downfall, God made Israel's name dreaded in Canaan (Jos 2:10), the land that fell to her as her

'inheritance.' But military conquest was only an early stage in God's plan, for all his world. We, who have seen the design unfold, are little moved by the psalmist's lesser joy. 'Inheritance of the land,' classical formula of Israel's ideal, was a hope gradually purified, indeed, and spiritualized by national misfortune; taken into our Lord's hands, it was blessed and changed forever. 'The meek shall possess the land,' not the warlike; the Kingdom is not of this world. Nor is the conquest: Pharaoh, Og, Sihon are foes within us, for our war is with the rulers of this darkness. Our armor is the apparel of the spirit (Eph 6:12ff). Thank God for his victorious grace, and for 'the inheritance that does not corrupt, was reserved for you in heaven' (1 P 1:4).

This psalm must be gradually completed with the new proofs of divine love in our lives.

The psalmist encourages us to give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his kindness endures forever. And like him, St. Paul encourages us also in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 to, 'Rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks to God at every moment. This is the will of God, your vocation as Christians.' Indeed, we as Christians particularly have to thank God for Jesus Christ who has shown us the path to eternal salvation.

- ⁴He alone does great marvels, his kindness endures forever. 72:18; 15:11
- ⁵In wisdom he made the heavens, his kindness endures forever. Pro 3:19; 8:27-29
- ⁶He set the earth upon the waters, his kindness endures forever. 24:2
- ⁷He made the great lights, his kindness endures forever, Gen 1:16
- ⁸the sun to rule over the day, his kindness endures forever,
- ⁹the moon and stars to rule the night, his kindness endures forever.
- ¹⁰He slew the firstborn of Egypt, his kindness endures forever, 78:51; 135:8
- ¹¹and brought Israel out, his kindness endures forever,
- ¹²with strong hand and outstretched arm, his kindness endures forever. Dt 4:34
- ¹³He split the Sea of Reeds, his kindness endures forever, 14:21
- ¹⁴and made Israel pass through it, his kindness endures forever,
- ¹⁵drowning Pharaoh and his army, his kindness endures forever,
- ¹⁶and led his people through the desert, his kindness endures forever. Dt 82, 15
- ¹⁷He struck down great kings, his kindness endures forever,
- ¹⁸and killed mighty kings, his kindness endures forever,
- ¹⁹Sihon, king of the Amorites, his kindness endures forever, Dt 2:30
- ²⁰and Og, king of Bashan, his kindness endures forever. Dt 3:1
- ²¹He gave their land as an inheritance, his kindness endures forever, 44:3
- ²²a heritage to Israel his servant, his kindness endures forever. Is 41:8; 44:21
- ²³He remembered us in our humiliation, his kindness endures forever, Lk 1:48
- ²⁴and freed us from our oppressors, his kindness endures forever, 106:43; Lk 1:71
- ²⁵he who gives food to all creatures, his kindness endures forever. 104:27; 145: 15-16
- ²⁶Give thanks to the God of heaven, his kindness endures forever! Dn 2:18

PSALM 137 (136)**Homesickness in exile**

Ezk 3:15;
Lm 3:48 ¹By the streams of Babylon,
we sat; and then wept,
as we remembered Zion.

Is 24:8;
Jer
25:10;
Lm 5:14 ²When, on the poplars,
we hung our harps,

³our captors asked for song.

Our tormentors wanted songs of joy:
“Sing to us one of the songs of Zion!”

⁴How could we sing Yahweh’s song
in a strange and alien land?

Jer
51:50 ⁵If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
may my right hand fall useless!

122:1 ⁶May my tongue cleave to my palate
if I remember you not,
if Jerusalem is not the first of my joys.

Ezk 25:
12-14;
35;
Ob 1:
10-14;
Lm 4:
21-22 ⁷Remember, Yahweh, the Edomites
—what did they do when Jerusalem fell?
They said, “Tear the city down,
tear it down to its foundations!”

Is 47:1;
Jer
50—51;
Rev 18:6 ⁸O daughter of Babylon, you will be sacked;
happy is he who repays you
and does to you what you have done to us!

Is 14:22;
Hos 14:1 ⁹Happy is he who seizes your infants,
and dashes them against the rocks!

PSALM 138 (137)**Thanksgiving to a faithful God.**

9:2 ¹I thank you, O Yahweh, with all my heart,
for you have heard the word of my lips.
I sing your praise in the presence of the gods.

5:8 ²I bow down toward your holy temple
and give thanks to your name,
for your love and faithfulness,
for your word, which exceeds everything.

Is 40:29 ³You answered me when I called;
you restored my soul and made me strong.

68:33;
Mal 1:11 ⁴O Yahweh, all kings on earth will give you praise,
when they have heard your words.

⁵They will celebrate the ways of Yahweh,
“great is the glory of Yahweh!”

Is 57:15 ⁶From above, Yahweh watches over the lowly;
from afar, he marks down the haughty.

• **137 (136)** A Christian cannot feel entirely at home in a world, where religion is just a matter of mild curiosity, or even an object of violent attack. But we will not succumb, we will not forget what people we are; nor we will just wait passively for the end, but vigorously repel the attacks to which the Church is subject.

The passionate love for Jerusalem and the Lord is above everything. Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2; 10:21 accepts the axis of the psalm Jerusalem/Babylon to refer to the new Jerusalem and the great city symbol of evil. Does faith pain us? Do we sweat blood in order to keep a faithful love for the Lord? Whom do we love with all our being, even at the cost of our physical integrity? We pray with this psalm, united with all those who love God above everything.

This perhaps is one of the most difficult of all the psalms. It should be a reminder to us that evil will continue to be all around us.

• **138 (137)** The great God, Lord of the world and of angels, cares for us, constantly surpassing what we could expect from him.

The one who prays does not know how his own future will be. He is certain, however, that if the dangers are great, the hand of God is saving and his love is eternal. God cannot forsake the work of his hands. Thanksgiving has a future.

The psalmist thanks God repeatedly for answering his prayers. Indeed, our prayers will be answered because Jesus told us so. Jesus even taught us how to pray (Mt 6:9), and told us to ask and we will receive (Mt 7:7) and whatever we ask in prayer full of faith, you will receive (Mt 21:22).

⁷If I walk in the midst of trouble,
you give me life.
With outstretched arm,
you save me from the wrath of my foes,
with your right hand, you deliver me.

23:5

⁸How Yahweh cares for me!
Your kindness, O Yahweh, endures forever.
Forsake not the work of your hands.

57:3;
100:5**PSALM 139 (138)****The Hound of Heaven.**

• **139 (138)** This wisdom meditation about the knowledge and the presence of God, perhaps, had its beginning in the face of the pressure of evildoers (19-22); someone has been unjustly accused, perhaps as idolatrous, and he appeals to God. In this environment, he composes his poem.

Our thoughts may sweep and soar over the world, over the bewildering profusion of the galaxies, and know that God is there, wherever our mind's eye looks—and that he is also in the depths of our own soul.

The human architecture is so divine that it carries the imprint of God. The adventures of this wonderful work of God which is the human being are affectionately cared for, by the divine care (16). Isn't it irrational for anyone to hate the Lord, since, all good things come from him? The ways of God are unsearchable, his wisdom is an abyss (cf. Rom 11:33). God gets close to us and embraces us, not to condemn us, but to guide our feet toward his love. If we want to taste divine love and appreciate the dignity of man, it will do us good, to pray with this magnificent psalm.

In the closing verse 24, the psalmist wants to be lead to eternal life. Fortunately for us, Jesus tells us, 'Whoever believes has eternal life' (Jn 6:47) and again, 'I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me' (Jn 14:6).

¹O Yahweh, you know me:
you have scrutinized me.

Jer 12:3

²You know when I sit and when I rise;
beforehand, you discern my thoughts.

2K 19:27;
Job 31:4;
Ps 44:22;
Heb 4:13

³You observe my activities and times of rest;
you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴Before a word is formed in my mouth,
you know what it is all about, O Yahweh.

⁵From front to back you hedge me round,
shielding me with your protecting hand.

⁶Your knowledge leaves me astounded,
it is too high for me to reach.

⁷Where else could I go from your Spirit?
Where could I flee from your presence?

Am 9:2-3;
Job
11:8-9;
23 8-9;
Jer 23:
23-24;
Pro 15:11

⁸You are there, if I ascend the heavens;
you are there, if I descend to the depths.

⁹If I ride on the wings of the dawn,
and settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰even there, your hand shall guide me,
and your right hand shall hold me safely.

¹¹Shall I say, "Let darkness hide me,
I prefer the night as my light?"

¹²But darkness, for you, is not dark;
and night, for you, shines as the day.

Job
12:22;
Dn 2:22

¹³It was you who formed my inmost part
and knit me together in my mother's womb.

Job 10:8

¹⁴I thank you for these wonders you have done,
and my heart praises you, for your marvelous
deeds.

¹⁵Even my bones were known to you
when I was being formed in secret,
fashioned in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶Your eyes saw the course of my days;

Mal 3:16;
Dn 7:10;

Ps 69:29;
Job 14:5;
Rev
20:12 they were all recorded in your book,
before any of them came to be.

Job 11:7;
Sir 18:
5-7;
Rom
11:33 ¹⁷How difficult it is to grasp your thoughts, O God!
Their number cannot be counted.

¹⁸If I tried to do so, they would outnumber the
sands;
I am never finished with you.

119:115 ¹⁹If only you would slay the wicked, O God,
and drive away from me the violent!

Job
21:14 ²⁰They rebel false-heartedly,
your foes blaspheme your name.

119:158;
5:11 ²¹I hate those who hate you, O Yahweh,
and loathe those who defy you.

²²I hate them deeply;
they have become my foes.

17:3;
26:2 ²³Search me, O God, and know my heart;
try me, and know my thoughts.

5:9;
143:10 ²⁴See if my steps are going astray,
and lead me in your eternal way.

PSALM 140 (139)

Prayer under persecution.

²O Yahweh, deliver me from the evil one; protect me from violent people, ³forever plotting evil and stirring up strife.

Rom
3:13 ⁴They have tongues sharp as a serpent's and
venomous lips.

⁵Save me, O Yahweh, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the hands of the violent, who have planned to trip my feet.

Jer
18:22;
Ps 57:7;
Sir
12:16 ⁶The arrogant have set a snare for me; they
have spread out their nets to entrap me along
my path.

31:15 ⁷I say to Yahweh, "You are my God." Hear, O
Yahweh, my voice in supplication.

⁸O God, my Yahweh, my strength and salvation, in the day of battle you shield my head.

⁹Do not grant, O Yahweh, the desires of the wicked; do not let their evil schemes succeed.

¹⁰Let my attackers be overwhelmed by the mischief they prepared, and not lift up their heads.

Gen
19:24;
Num
16:31;
Ps 11:6 ¹¹Let burning coals rain upon them; let them
be cast into the depths, never to rise again.

• **140 (139)** The life of people on earth is a warfare; there can be no truce between our Lord and the prince of darkness, and people must take sides. Here, we take our side, knowing that the battle is bitter but the victory certain.

There are victims because there still are executors. In praying with this psalm, we listen to the clamor of persecuted believers, who still have the strength to say: 'You are my God.'

The psalmist in the last verse rightly says, 'The just will praise your name, the upright shall dwell in your presence.' Jesus has told us in John 14:3, 'After I have gone and prepared a place for you, I shall come again and take you to me, so that where I am, you may also be.' Indeed, if only we live a righteous life and follow Jesus' simple commandments on love, we will forever live in God's presence.

¹²Do not let the slanderer thrive on earth; let disaster hunt down the violent. 55:24

¹³I know that Yahweh upholds the cause of the afflicted; and justice will be done to the poor.

¹⁴The just shall praise your name, the upright shall dwell in your presence. 11:7; 16:11; 17:15

PSALM 141 (140)

Evening prayer for protection.

• **141 (140)** As each day ends, what have we to bring to God? Only our weariness with the struggle; our dismay that it must continue; and our prayer that we may persevere!

'Let my prayer rise to you like incense...' are the words of the psalmist. If we too pray sincerely, our prayers will rise to heaven. In fact, in Matthew 6:6 Jesus tells us, 'When you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father who is with you in secret; and your Father who sees what is kept in secret will reward you.' And in John 15:16 Jesus says, 'And everything you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.'

We can pray with this psalm, when we see the evil surrounding us and we wouldn't want to sin or hurt anyone with our words. With this psalm, we ask God to deliver us from evil.

¹Lord, I call on you, hasten to help me! Listen to my plea when I call to you.

²Let my prayer rise to you, like incense; as I lift up my hands, as in an evening sacrifice. 29:39; 30:8; Num 28:4

³O Yahweh, set a guard at my mouth; keep watch at the gate of my lips.

⁴Let not my heart be drawn to evil; let me not be enticed into evil acts in company with sinners, and let me not partake of their delights.

⁵Rather, the reproach and the just scourge, than the oil of the wicked anointing my head. Pro 9:8; 25:12; 27:6-9

⁶When their rulers are flung upon the rock, only then, will these wicked learn that I was tolerant with them;

⁷when the earth opens to swallow them, and their bones are scattered at the edge of the netherworld.

⁸But my eyes are turned to you, O God, my Yahweh; strip me not of life, for you are my refuge.

⁹Keep me from the trap they have set for me; keep me from the net laid by evildoers.

¹⁰Let the wicked fall into their own snares, while I alone escape, safe and free. 7:16; 35:8; Pro 26:27

PSALM 142 (141)

Prayer of a man deserted by his friends.

• **142 (141)** The feeling of failure comes to everyone, at some time: the feeling of desolation when things go wrong, when friends fail, when every escape route seems barred and we have nowhere to turn, except in on ourselves: but, it is then, that we find that there is always God, who knows and cares. This psalm is applicable to the passion

²I cry aloud to Yahweh, in a loud voice I beseech Yahweh.

³Before him, I pour out my sorrows; before him, I lay bare my troubles;

⁴and my spirit grows faint. But you know my path.

Along the way I walk, they have hidden a trap for me. 139:24; 141:9

57:1

121:5 ⁵Look to my right and see:
no one recognizes me.
I have lost all means of escape;
no one wants to help me.

91:2, 9;
16:5 ⁶I cry to you, O Yahweh;
I say, "You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living."

79:8 ⁷Listen to my groaning,
for I am in deep despair.
Rescue me from my pursuers,
for they are too strong for me.

88:9;
Lm 3:7 ⁸O, set me free from captivity,
that I may praise your name!
Then, the righteous will gather about me,
when they see that you took care of me.

PSALM 143 (142)

Prayer in desolation: seventh psalm of repentance.

¹O Yahweh, hear my prayer, listen to my cry
for mercy; answer me; you, who are righteous
and faithful.

Job 9:2;
14:3-4;
Ecl 7:20;
Rom
3:20 ²Do not bring your servant to judgment; for
no mortal is just in your sight.

7:6;
Lm 3:6 ³The enemy has pursued me, crushing my
life to the ground, sending me to darkness, with
those long dead.

142:4;
Job 17:1 ⁴And so my spirit fails me; my heart is full of fear.

77:6;
77:13 ⁵I remember the days of long ago; I meditate
on what you have done, and consider the work
of your hand.

63:2 ⁶I stretch out my hands to you, and thirst for
you, like a parched land.

10:1;
68:16;
102:3;
28:1;
88:5 ⁷O Yahweh, answer me quickly: my spirit is
faint with yearning. Do not hide your face from
me; save me from going down to the pit.

17:15;
25:1-2;
86:4 ⁸Let the dawn bring me word of your love; for
in you alone, I put my trust. Show me the way I
should walk, for to you I lift up my soul.

⁹Rescue me from my enemies, O Yahweh, for
to you, I flee for refuge.

25:4-5 ¹⁰Teach me to do your will, for you are my
God. Let your Spirit lead me on a safe path.

¹¹Preserve me, O Yahweh, for your name's
sake; free me from distress, in your justice.

54:7;
116:16 ¹²You, who are merciful, crush my enemies
and destroy all my foes, for I am your servant.

of Christ and St. Francis of Assisi
prayed it when he was dying.

Jesus declares himself to be
'the Way' (Jn 14:6), leading
to the land of the living (cf. Jn
14:2). We pray with this psalm,
in union with those who are on
the way and also with those who
feel exhausted because of the dif-
ficulties of the journey.

Many of us will at some time
or the other, feel as desperate
as the psalmist is with no one
to turn too for help. It is in this
situation that he turns to the
only source of inspiration and
help and that is to our Heavenly
Father. Even Jesus went through
this very agonizing situation dur-
ing His passion and He called to
His Father.

• **143 (142)** We do not al-
ways find it possible to connect
a particular suffering with a spe-
cific sin, but it is true that human
suffering is the mark of our
estrangement from God; and in
our sorrow we become aware of
that gulf, and aware of our des-
perate need of him.

The relationship between sove-
reign and servant is at work in
this individual supplication. There
is a relationship of love or loyalty
between them. The title *Servant*
sounds very well in Jesus' lips.
As for ourselves, may God not
sue us, since, despite our unfaith-
fulness, God remains faithful (cf.
2 Tim 2:13). When praying with
this psalm, we realize, not only
our own unfaithfulness, but also
the faithfulness of God: despite
everything, in the morning, he
will show us his love.

'Show me the way I should
walk...' says the psalmist in verse
8. His prayers were answered as
God came down as Jesus and
tells us in John 14:6, 'I am the
way, the truth and the life; no
one comes to the Father but
through me.'

PSALM 144 (143)**Appeal for victory and peace.**

• **144 (143)** Our Lord, the son of man, shared our weakness, shared our struggle; but in doing so, he showed us that God's strength shows itself most clearly in our weakness, bringing us joy and salvation.

The new heavens and the new earth take us beyond the psalm (cf. Rev 21:1-4; 2 P 3:13; Rom 8:19-23). The people of God, who expect the new kingdom, are being formed in the womb of history. It would be good for us not to forget exemplary lives; they will give us courage. Above all, it would be good for us to place our eyes in the Lord, who is the initiator and fulfiller of our faith.

It seems like God answered the psalmist's prayer in verse 5 when he says, 'Bend your heavens, O Yahweh, and come down.' For in John 1:1, 'In the beginning was the Word' and in John 1:14, 'And the Word was made flesh.' Then, in Luke 2:12 an angel of the Lord said, 'Today a Savior has been born to you in David's town; he is the Messiah and the Lord.' Jesus showed us the way. He taught us to pray. He has taught us to love. He has guided us through the narrow path. In short, if only we have faith and believe, we will be with Him one day, in heaven.

¹Blessed be Yahweh, my rock, who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle—²my loving God, my fortress; my protector and deliverer, my shield; where I take refuge; who conquers nations and subjects them to my rule.

³O Yahweh, what are humans that you should be mindful of them, the race of Adam, that you should care for them?

⁴They are like a breath; their days pass like a shadow on earth.

⁵Bend your heavens, O Yahweh, and come down; touch the mountain and make it smoke.

⁶Flash forth lightning and rout the foe; shoot your arrows and scatter them.

⁷From above, reach down and draw me out of the deep waters, from the hands of foreigners, ⁸whose mouths speak falsehood, whose words are full of deceit.

⁹I will sing a new song to you, O God; I will make music on the ten-stringed harp, ¹⁰for you, who give victory to kings and deliver David, your servant.

¹¹Rescue me from the evil sword and from the hands of foreigners, whose mouths speak falsehood, whose words are full of deceit.

¹²May our sons be like plants well-nurtured and full grown; and our daughters, like pillars that adorn the corners of the temple.

¹³May our barns be full, with every kind of provision.

May our sheep increase by thousands, even by tens of thousands, in our pastures.

¹⁴May our cattle be strong and fruitful; and may there be an end to raids and exile, to cries of distress in our streets.

¹⁵Happy are the people so blessed; happy the people whose God is Yahweh!

PSALM 145 (144)**Praise of God's grandeur: an alphabetical psalm.**

• **145 (144)** When we reflect on what God has done for us, we remember that this is what God has always done; our lives are borne along on the unend-

¹I will extol you, my God and King; I will praise your name forever.

²I will praise you, day after day; and exalt your name forever.

48:2;
95:3;
Job
36:26
71:18;
78:4
3 Great is Yahweh, most worthy of praise; and his deeds are beyond measure.

4 Parents commend your works to their children and tell them your feats.

5 They proclaim the splendor of your majesty and recall your wondrous works.

6 People will proclaim your mighty deeds; and I will declare your greatness.

7 They will celebrate your abundant kindness, and rejoice in singing of your justice.

103:8 8 Compassionate and gracious is Yahweh, slow to anger and abounding in love.

103:13;
Wis 1:
13-14 9 Yahweh is good to everyone; his mercy embraces all his creation.

10 All your works will give you thanks; all your saints, O Yahweh, will praise you.

93:1;
29:11 11 They will tell of the glory of your kingdom; and speak of your power, 12 that all may know of your mighty deeds, your reign, and its glorious splendor.

Dn 3:100;
Ps
102:13;
1Tim
1:17;
Rev
11:15 13 Your reign is from age to age; your dominion endures, from generation to generation.

Yahweh is true to his promises and lets his mercy show in all he does.

94:18;
146:9 14 Yahweh lifts up those who are falling and raises those who are beaten down.

104;
27-28;
Mt 6:25 15 All creatures look to you to be fed in due season; 16 with open hand, you satisfy the living, according to their needs.

Dt 32:4 17 Righteous is Yahweh in all his ways, his mercy shows in all his deeds.

Dt 4:7;
Jer
29:13;
Is 58:9 18 He is near those who call on him, who call trustfully upon his name.

34:18 19 He fulfills the wish of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

Jdg 5:31 20 For those who love him, Yahweh has compassion; but the wicked, he will destroy.

21 Let my mouth speak in praise of Yahweh, let every creature praise his holy name, for ever and ever.

PSALM 146 (145)

Praise of God's fidelity.

¹ *Alleluia!*

Praise Yahweh, my soul!

104:33;
7:18 2 I will sing to Yahweh all my life;
I will sing praise to God while I live.

ing stream of divine love. To the eternal God, eternal praise be given.

The central place of the 'reign of God' unites this psalm with the core of the preaching of Jesus 'the Kingdom of God' (cf. Mk 1:13-14) which must continue to grow in our society. That is why, it is necessary to pray with this psalm while we pray: 'Your kingdom come.'

The psalmist is all praise for God as indeed, we too, should be. He extols God's love and mercy and even how he saves those who cry for his help. In verse 19 he says, 'He fulfills the wish of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.' Did Jesus not do just that? In Luke 23:42 one of the criminals said to Jesus, 'Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.' And Jesus in verse 43 replied, 'Truly, you will be with me today in paradise.' Therefore, all we have to do is ask believing that He will grant it to us and we will receive all that we ask for.

• **146 (145)** The Almighty God is at our service: the All-Mighty, the only mighty; we cannot take out a second insurance—we must rely on him only,

cast all our cares on the Lord, for he cares for us.

God shows the faithfulness of his love, for all those who are weak and inclined to seek their salvation in the powerful. Also, for those who are in a situation of disadvantage because of others (oppressed, hungry, or captive) or because of illness (blind or fainting) or because of other circumstances of life (migrants, orphans and widows) benefit from the loving faithfulness of God. The programmatic discourse of Jesus, in the synagogue of Nazareth: 'He has sent me to give Good News to the poor, to announce freedom to prisoners...' (cf. Lk 4:17-22), updates the theme of this psalm. Human projects could be ambitious and challenging; they will not annul the divine project, however. If we trust totally in God, if we truly believe in Him, we can pray with this psalm. God is the one who liberates the poor. The more we are convinced of this, the more shall we try to share the Lord's thoughts, placing our lives at the service of the marginalized, the hungry and the humiliated.

³ Do not put your trust in princes, in a great one, who cannot save.

Is 2:22

⁴ Not sooner his spirit has left, that he goes back to the earth; on that very day, any plan comes to nothing.

90:3;
104:29;
Ecl 12:7;
1Mac
2:63

⁵ Blessed are they whose help is the God of Jacob,

Jer 17:7;
Ps 2:12

whose hope is in Yahweh their God,

⁶ maker of heaven and earth, the sea and all they contain.

24:1;
121:2;
124:8

Yahweh is forever faithful;

⁷ he gives justice to the oppressed and gives food to the hungry.

103:6;
68:7;
Is 49:9;
61:1

Yahweh sets the prisoners free.

^{8a} Yahweh gives sight to the blind;

145:14;
11:7

Yahweh straightens the bent.

⁹ Yahweh protects the stranger; sustains the widow and the orphan.

22:20;
22:21;
Ps 68:6

^{8b} Yahweh loves the virtuous;

but he brings to ruin the way of the wicked.

¹⁰ Yahweh will reign forever, your God, O Zion,

15:18;
Ps
145:13

from generation to generation. Alleluia!

PSALM 147 (146-147)

Praise to God who maintains the world.

• **147 (146-147)** God knows each of the myriad stars, not a sparrow falls, without his knowing, the hairs of our head are numbered. He does not want us, to try to rival him in power, but simply to wait on his love for us. The second part of this psalm is a praise of God's personal care for Israel. In the beginning was the Word, creating all things, and even upsetting things—like changing running water to solid ice, or making snow fall in the hot land of Palestine! And he can change us too: the Word of God, Jesus Christ, shows us God's will; he is the Way, leading us from misery to peace and happiness.

Our God fills the distance between the order of the universe and the life of each one of us. He calls the stars by name and helps the humble. He is intimately near

¹ Alleluia!

92:2

How good it is to sing to our God, how sweet and befitting, to praise him!

² Yahweh rebuilds Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel;

Is 11:12;
56:8;
Jer
31:10

³ he heals their broken hearts and binds up their wounds.

Jer 33:6;
Is 61:1;
Job 5:18

⁴ He determines the number of stars; he calls each of them by name.

Is 40:26;
Bar 3:35

⁵ The Lord is great, and mighty in power; his wisdom is beyond measure.

Is 40:28

⁶ Yahweh lifts up the humble, but casts the wicked to the ground.

1S 2:7-8

⁷ Sing to Yahweh with thanksgiving, make music on the harp for our God.

⁸ With clouds he covers the sky, and provides the earth with rain;

104:
10:14;
104:
27:28;

Jer 14:22;
Jl 2:23;
Job 5:
9-10
he covers the hills with grass
and with plants, for man to cultivate.

Job 38:41;
Mt 6:26
⁹He provides food for the cattle,
even for the young ravens when they call.

20:8-9;
33:16-18
¹⁰He is not concerned with the strength of a
horse;

nor is he pleased in the speed of a runner;

¹¹Yahweh delights in those who fear him
and expect him to care for them.

¹²Exalt Yahweh, O Jerusalem;
praise your God, O Zion!

Jer 33:10;
Is 65:18;
Ps 48:14
¹³For he strengthens the bars of your gates
and blesses your children within you.

Lev 26:6;
Ps 81:17
¹⁴He grants peace on your borders
and feeds you with the finest grain.

29:3;
33:9;
107:20;
Is 55:
10-11
¹⁵He sends his command to the earth
and swiftly runs his word.

¹⁶He spreads snow like wool;
he scatters frost like ashes.

Job 6:16;
37:10;
38:22
¹⁷He hurls down hail like pebbles;
who will stand before his icy blasts?

¹⁸But he sends his word and melts the snow;
he makes his breeze blow,
and again the waters flow.

Dt 33:
3-4
¹⁹It is he, who tells Jacob his words;
his laws and decrees, to Israel.

Dt 4:7-8;
Acts 14:
16-17
²⁰This, he has not done for other nations,
so his laws remain unknown to them.

Alleluia!

PSALM 148

Cosmic praise

Gen 1;
Ps 104
¹*Alleluia!* Praise Yahweh from the heavens;
praise him in the heavenly heights.

103:
20-21;
Job 38:7
²Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his
heavenly hosts.

³Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all
you shining stars.

1K 8:27;
Gen 1:7
⁴Praise him, you highest heavens and you
waters above the skies.

Jer 31:
35-36
⁵Let them praise the name of Yahweh, at
whose command they were made.

⁶He established them forever; and gave each
a fixed and lasting duty.

to each one of his children, but
he comes to them through the
reality—so humanly deceiving in
many cases—of his Church.

The Jews marveled at the
transformation of water into ice:
how could God so transform
the elements? In the same way,
we marvel when suddenly God
melts situations in our world that
seemed permanently solidified.

From this psalm, we can turn
to the Johanne hymn (Jn 1:1-
14) and from this, return to the
psalm. We are the people of
God on pilgrimage on this earth
and gathered in the Church. We
pray with this thanksgiving psalm
because it is right and necessary,
to give unceasing thanks to God
through Jesus.

• **148** The whole of creation
resounds with the praise of God;
the music begins in heaven, and
from there passes down to earth
and goes around the whole world.
But, at the center of it all, is the
people of God. For they are the
beginning of a new creation, and
through them, the whole world
is to be recreated, to the greater
glory of God.

The whole of creation (heavens,
earth, and abyss) must bend the
knee and praise the 'Name above
any other name' (Phil 2:9-10).
In order to pray with this

psalm, we need to have an ecumenical heart, where everything and everyone finds room. From heaven and from earth, there will be praise to God, in an only polyphonic choir.

⁷Praise Yahweh from the earth; you sea creatures, and all the depths;

⁸clouds and snow, hail and lightning, storm winds that do his bidding;

⁹you mountains, and all you hills; you fruit trees and cedars; Is 44:23

¹⁰you wild beasts and tame animals; you creeping things and winged fowl. Is 43:20

¹¹Kings of the earth; and nations, princes and all rulers of the world; ¹²young men and maidens; old and young, together—¹³let them praise the name of Yahweh; Jer 31:13 108:6 113:4

for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven.

¹⁴He has given his people glory; he has given a praise to his faithful, to Israel, the people close to him. Alleluia. 89:18; Dt 7:6; Eph2:13

PSALM 149

Praise to the God of victories.

• **149** We join in the song of victory, the triumph of God, the crushing of the serpent's head; for we have our part in the victorious struggle, wearing the armor of God, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit.

The 'loyal ones' express their devotion in a rigorous way. They oppose the unjust violent person, with a just violent person. They execute the sentence dictated by God and that is their honor. Their religious enthusiasm and their faith in God the creator is valid for us because the Gospel asks of us not to respond to violence with the violence of the sword (Mt 26:52-54). Our battle must be 'against the spirits and supernatural forces of evil' (Eph 6:12). Evil and sin in our world are an affront to our Creator; the pain of the humble is the pain of the Lord. We pray with this psalm, in union with all those who are hungry and thirsty for justice. They are blessed.

¹Alleluia! 40:10

Sing to Yahweh a new song, sing his praise in the assembly of his saints.

²Let Israel rejoice in his Maker; let the people of Zion glory in their King!

³Let them dance in praise of his name; and make music for him with harp and timbrel. 87:7; 150:4; 68:26; 81:3

⁴For Yahweh delights in his people; he crowns the lowly with victory. Is 61:9; 62:4-5; 1S 2:8

⁵The saints will exult in triumph; even at night, on their couches,

⁶let the praise of God be on their lips; and in their hands, two-edged swords;

⁷to wreak vengeance on the nations, and punishment on the peoples;

⁸to bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in iron fetters;

⁹to execute on them, the written sentence: this is the glory of all his saints. Alleluia! Ne 4; 10:12; 2Mac 15:27; Rev 19:15; Zec 9; 13:16

PSALM 150**Final summons to praise.**¹ *Alleluia!*

Praise God in his Sanctuary;
 praise him, in the vault of heaven.

²Praise him, for his mighty deeds;
 praise him, for his own greatness.

³Praise him with trumpet blast;
 praise him with lyre and harp.

⁴Praise him, with dance and tambourines;
 praise him with pipe and strings.

⁵Praise him with clashing cymbals;
 praise him with clanging cymbals.

⁶Let everything that breathes, sing praise to
 Yahweh.
 Alleluia!

• **150** The psalms have shown us prayers of petition, lament, instruction, warning and exhortation: but above all and in all, they are praises of God. This praise will absorb, more and more, our being, absorb every being, in a final diapason.

The last word of everything, created and redeemed, is this: 'Alleluia!' We have entered into eternal celebration, into eternal joy. This psalm refers us to Revelation 19:1-10, and to the triumphal songs in heaven. Our community, our people, anticipates the heavenly 'Alleluia' when they sing the praise of God on this earth.

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