

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 one most often used in our Latin Liturgy.

The Songs in the Bible

Together with the psalms we should also indicate other prayers which we find in most parts of the Bible 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

The two ways. What you sow in life you will harvest. Those who keep God's law will be happy here and in the next life. Whoever refuses it will not prosper.

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

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

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

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

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

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

• **1** The first psalm speaks of happiness, just as Jesus' first discourse began with "Happy!" (or being blessed, "Fortunate").

We often find the theme of two ways in the Bible (Dt 30:15; Jer 21:8; Pro 4:18; Mt 7:13). It expresses our personal responsibility which will be clearly seen on the day of judgment. Whatever the appearances may be at times, true happiness is for those who are faithful to the will of God.

Jesus is the green and productive tree, *par excellence*. All that is good, great, beautiful and holy in the heart of a person blossoms on the tree of the cross.

PSALM 2

Verses 6-9 are like an oracle of God warning all nations that he himself has crowned his Son in Zion, the holy hill of Jerusalem. He asks every king to submit. This king is, of course, the Messiah, "God's Anointed" (we call him the Christ). His cause is that of the innumerable poor who await his justice throughout the entire world.

The kings of the earth, the rulers are not the only ones who persecute, but all those who wield power over people's minds, who create public opinion among the masses, and the mafias, the powers of darkness. God confronts them and with him the victorious Anointed One who is called the Son.

The two kingdoms. This struggle between the kings of the earth and God's Anointed announces the Book of Revelation. God has come among us. His presence is a challenge to those who would like to be lords of the earth. There will be no lasting peace here below.

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 the Lord and his anointed.
³ They say, "Let us break their bonds!
Let us cast away their chains!"
⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord 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!"
⁷ I will proclaim the decree of the Lord.
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.
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 the Lord 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!

PSALM 3

How many are my enemies! King David, like all Christians, has an ally more powerful than all his enemies together: God.

² O Lord, 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!"
⁴ But you are my shield, O Lord,
my glory, you lift up my head.
⁵ Aloud I cry to the Lord,
and from his holy hill he answers me.
⁶ If I lie down to sleep,
again I awake, for the Lord supports me;
⁷ no fear of the thousands standing against me.

⁸ Arise, O Lord!
 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 the Lord.
 May your blessing be upon your people!

PSALM 4

Evening prayer. An evening prayer for those who trust God in the midst of their difficulties, remembering how many times God has come to their assistance. Gratitude for favors received leads us to ask for more; this request will be more trustful; trust will bring us peace and joy in our difficulties. Evil and misfortune come in many ways, but prayer always brings strength.

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 the Lord
 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.

⁶ Offer the sacrifice commanded by the Law
 and put your trust in the Lord your God.

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

⁸ You, O Lord, 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 Lord,
 make me feel safe and secure.

PSALM 5

Morning prayer. Let us begin the day by asking God to be our light and our strength; going also to the house of God, his temple where his light and his strength are within our reach.

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

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.

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

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

⁷ you destroy all who speak false-
 hood, who thirst for blood and live on
 lies; all of them the Lord detests.

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

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

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 Lord, make them pay for their guilt. Let their snares trap them. Cast

them out for their many sins – for their offense and rebellion.

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 Lord.

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

PSALM 6

Prayer of the afflicted. This psalm is the prayer of a sick person. When she asks to be freed of her sickness she reaffirms her unshaken trust and will to have nothing to do with evil.

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

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

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

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

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.

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

¹⁰The Lord has heard my plea; the Lord will grant all that I pray for.

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

PSALM 7

Free me from my persecutors. A cry that comes from the depth of the soul, demanding justice.

²O Lord, 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 Lord, 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 Lord, 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 Lord, my righteousness; you see that I am blameless.

¹⁰Bring to an end the power of the wicked, 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.

¹²A righteous judge is God, his anger ever awaiting those who refuse to repent.

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.

¹⁵Look at the one who conceived iniquity and is pregnant with mischief: miscarriage will result.

¹⁶He digs a pit and makes it deep, he will fall into the trap he made.

¹⁷His evil intent recoils upon his

head; his wicked design comes back in his face.

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

PSALM 8

Our liberal culture knows only individuals, “human beings” eager to enjoy life at the level of their fortune and good health.

Individuals, being “pots of earth among other pots of earth,” struggle to affirm their own identity. They dream of being totally independent. This psalm on the contrary emphasizes the dignity of the human person which awakens at the call of God and develops under his watchful eye.

The text of verses 5-7 would be betrayed by inclusive language because the expressions “the mortal” and the “son of man” are at the same time individuals and humankind.

Speaking of humans, the Bible sees them both as persons and as one body: Adam, Man, or Humankind. The head of this unique body is Christ, he who is to be the keystone of all creation. See how the apostles apply to Jesus the words of this psalm: Mt 21:16; 1 Cor 15:27; Eph 1:22; Heb 2:6-8.

No one can build himself if he has not yet sought his mission in the world. He is nothing without his brothers and sisters who struggle or vegetate in the ant-hills of the entire world.

Glory of God and dignity of humans. The universe reveals the glory and the beauty of God. In becoming one of us, the Son of God has put humans above all material creation and emphasized the fundamental equality of all humans.

²O Lord, our Lord,
how great is your name throughout the earth!
And your glory in the heavens above.

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 –
⁵what is the mortal that you be mindful of him,
the son of man, that you should care for him?

⁶Yet you made him a little lower than the angels;
you have crowned him with glory and honor.

⁷You made him rule over the works of your hands;
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 Lord, our Lord,
how great is your name all over the earth!

PSALM 9

²Let my heart give thanks to the Lord, I yearn to proclaim your marvelous deeds, ³and rejoice and exult in you, and sing praise to your name, O Most High.

⁴For my enemies fell back in retreat, they stumbled and perished before you. ⁵You have upheld my right

and my cause, you have sentenced from your throne, O just judge.

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

⁷Your enemies lay in endless ruin, their cities trampled, their memory perished.

• **9** Psalms 9 and 10 of the Hebrew text are only the two halves of the Greek or Latin Bible text. This causes the disarrangement in the numbering of the psalms which begins here. Psalm 9 denounces the

enemies of Israel. Psalm 10 denounces the wicked within the community. Those who exploit the widow and the orphan, the foreigner and the traveler, are in fact the enemies of God.

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

⁹He will judge the nations with justice and govern the peoples in righteousness.

¹⁰The Lord is a rampart for the oppressed, a refuge in times of distress.

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

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

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

¹⁴Have mercy on me, O Lord. See how they 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 dug, their own feet ensnared by the trap they laid.

¹⁷The Lord 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 the nations that have no thought of God.

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

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

²¹Bring terror, O Lord, strike at them; let these pagans realize that they are but humans.

PSALM 10 (9)

Continuation of the preceding psalm.

¹Why, O Lord, do you stand afar? Why hide from us in times of distress?

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

³Exploiters boast in their power and greed; the covetous blasphemes and defies God.

⁴In their pride the wicked say, "There is no 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 and threats; spite and mischief are under their tongues.

⁸They lie in ambush near the villages, murdering the innocent and the

unfortunate, spying upon their next victim.

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.

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

¹²Rise, Lord, 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.

• **10** The rich and the powerful may think that God is far away, that he is passive, and that perhaps, he does not exist. But God hears the cry of the oppressed. It is very easy to become rich in spirit in a

consumer world: every Christian must ask himself to what extent he is not responsible for the injustice and discrimination which we witness.

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

¹⁷For you hear, O Lord, 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)

When foundations fall to ruin, what can the righteous do? That is what the tempter suggests, "Do not swim upstream, everyone does it; do as they do and say nothing. Flee to the mountain, simple one; you have seen nothing, forget about injustice and see to your own business, or instead go to your religious practices!"

Let us pray for those who struggle against organized oppression, for those who awake each day to the threat of terrorism.

The just fear nothing. If God is with us, who will condemn us? May he deliver us from fear when we face those who threaten and crush others.

¹In the Lord I take refuge.

How, then, can you say to me,
"Flee to the mountains like a bird;

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?"

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

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

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

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

PSALM 12 (11)

Against the world of lies. Lies, propaganda and the false prophets of the easy life conceal the injustice of every day. God's word is true, and it will judge the world. In the Word-of-God-made-man, there is no yes and no: in him all the promises of God have become a yes.

²Help us, O Lord, none of the godly are left, the faithful have vanished. ³Everyone lies; with flattering lips they speak from a double heart.

⁴May the Lord cut off insincere lips,
every glib tongue that utters deceit.

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

⁶"The poor are despoiled and the

needy suffer, now I will save them," says the Lord. "I will give them security."

⁷The promises of the Lord are sure and lasting – silver refined in the furnace seven times and freed from dross.

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

PSALM 13 (12)

Personal prayer, persevering prayer will surely be heard.

Look and listen to me. God does not forget his children: he has resurrected Christ.

²How long, O Lord, 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 Lord my God!

Give light to my eyes,
lest I sleep the sleep of death;

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

⁶But I put my trust in your unfailing love,
my heart will rejoice on seeing your salvation.

I will sing to the Lord,
for he has been good to me!

PSALM 14 (13)

Without respect for neighbors, without respect for God.

¹The fool says in his heart,
“God does not exist.”
All have strayed, all are perverted,
there is no one who does good.

²The Lord looks down from heaven
upon the race of Adam,
to see if there are any
who seek God and act wisely.

³They have all turned aside:
corrupt – all of them alike.

⁴Will they ever learn – these doers of evil?
For they devour my people,
– that is their food –
and do not call upon the Lord.

⁵But suddenly terror strikes them:
God was on the side of the just!

⁶You may confound the hope of the poor,
but the Lord is their refuge.

⁷Oh would that I see
Israel’s salvation coming from Zion!
When the Lord brings home the exiles,
what joy it will be for Jacob,
what happiness for Israel!

PSALM 15 (14)

This psalm repeats in its own way the word of the prophet Hosea: "I prefer mercy to sacrifice." To the question, *who will dwell in your tent?* he replies with a list of ten virtues of justice: service of God and justice are two facets of a same attitude.

PSALM 16 (15)

The Israelites lived among pagan nations, but even among the people, many shared the pagan superstitions while professing their faith in one God. When they took part in sacrifices offered to local gods, they mixed idolatry with the practice of true faith.

The author of this psalm is doubtless a Levite, a priest. In the past when God divided the Promised Land among the tribes, he said to the Levites: "I will be your part of inheritance." Now he guides this Levite amidst the compromises of a people more unfaithful than faithful.

The commitment of the psalmist is so unconditional that he does not think that even death can sever his relationship with God (vv. 10-11).

You will not abandon my soul to the grave. The psalmist is certain that God can deliver him from this dark, sad place, which, according to the belief of that time, was the dwelling place of the dead. He will place him at his right forever.

From the beginning, Christians took these words as applying especially to the risen Jesus (Acts 2:25 and 13:35).

Loyalty to God does not mean hostility towards 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.

Lord, who shall dwell in your tent? May the Lord help us to follow his commandments.

¹ O Lord, who will dwell in your tent
and reside on your holy mount?
² Those who walk blamelessly
and do what is right,
who speak truth from their heart
³ and control their words,
who do no harm to their neighbors
and cast no discredit on their companions,
⁴ who look down on evildoers
but highly esteem God's servants;
who at all cost stand by a pledged word,
⁵ who do not lend money at interest
and refuse a bribe against the innocent.
Do this, and you will soon be shaken.

The Lord is my inheritance. God is my share of inheritance: I chose him as my only Lord and I will rejoice in him for all eternity.

¹ Keep me safe, O God,
for in you I take refuge.
² I say to the Lord,
"You are my Lord, my only good."
³ The gods of the earth are but nothing,
cursed be those who delight in them.
⁴ Those who run after foreign gods
only have their sorrows multiplied.
Let me not shed blood for them,
nor their names be heard on my lips.
⁵ O Lord, my inheritance and my cup,
my chosen portion – hold secure my lot.
⁶ The best part has been allotted to me.
Delightful indeed is my inheritance!
⁷ I bless the Lord who counsels me;
even at night my inmost self instructs me.
⁸ I keep the Lord always before me;
for with him at my right hand,
I will never be shaken.
⁹ My heart, therefore, exults, my soul rejoices;
my body too will rest assured.
¹⁰ For you will not abandon
my soul to the grave,
nor will you suffer your holy one
to see decay in the land of the dead.
¹¹ You will show me the path of life,
in your presence the fullness of joy,
at your right hand happiness forever.

PSALM 17 (16)**Outcry of the innocent.**

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

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,
and you have seen no wickedness in me.

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.

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.

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

¹³Arise, O Lord, confront them, overthrow them!
May your sword deliver me from the wicked.

¹⁴O Lord, 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.

¹⁵As for me, righteous in your sight,
I shall see your face and, awakening,
gaze my fill on your likeness.

PSALM 18 (17)

A liberator gives thanks to God. This psalm celebrates a victory. Enthusiasm, fervor, gratitude: God has shaken the universe to come to my help.

²I love you, O Lord, my strength.

³The Lord 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 strong-
hold.

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

⁵A deadly flood surrounded me,
devilish torrents rushed at me;

⁶caught by the cords of the grave,
I was brought to the snares of death.

⁷But I called upon the Lord 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.

⁸Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations of the mountains shook;
they trembled at his fury.

⁹Smoke rose from his nostrils,
from his mouth a devouring fire
throwing off live embers.

¹⁰He bent the heavens and came down
with dark clouds under his feet.

¹¹He rode on a cherub and flew,
borne on the swift wings of the wind.

¹²Veiled with darkness surrounding him,
he made misty rain clouds his tent.

¹³Then from the brightness of his presence
hail and fiery embers broke forth.

¹⁴From heaven the Lord thundered;
the voice of the Most High resounded.

¹⁵Sending out a hail of arrows, he scattered them;
flashing forth bolts of lightning, he routed them.

¹⁶The beds of the seas appeared,
the foundations of the world were laid bare
at the rebuke of the Lord,
at the blast of his breath.

• **18** We find in 2 Samuel 22 a version only slightly different from this psalm attributed to David.

The author thanks God who has given him the victory, he recognizes with gratitude his intervention. This intervention is expressed in a poetic way like a glorious appearance of God in the heights of heaven (see Hb 3).

18:3. *My powerful Savior*: literally: my triumphant horn.

18:10. *He bent the heavens and came down*. It is what he did when his own Son came among us to deliver humanity from its enemies.

18:11. In the traditions of the Middle East, the *cherubs* were the winged monsters charged to escort the gods. For the Israelites they drew God's chariot or carried his throne.

18:29. Jesus said: "I am the light of the world," and we repeat with the psalmist: *You give light to my lamp*.

¹⁷ Reaching down from above,
he drew me out of the deep waters.

¹⁸ Too strong for me were my enemies,
but he rescued me from my adversaries.

¹⁹ They launched their attack on an opportune day,
but the Lord was my support.

²⁰ He has set me out in the open,
he saved me because he cares for me!

²¹ The Lord rewarded me for my justice,
according to my righteousness.

²² For I have been faithful to the Lord'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.

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

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

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

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

²⁹ Lord, you give light to my lamp.
O my God, you brighten my darkness.

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

³¹ This God – his way is perfect;
the word of the Lord can stand fire.
He is a shield for those who seek refuge in him.

³² There is no other God but Yahweh.
There is no other rock but our God.

³³ He is the God who girds me with strength
and prepares my ways.

³⁴ He makes my feet as swift as the deer's;
he sets me securely on the heights.

³⁵ He trains my hands for war
and my arms to bend the bronze-bow.

³⁶ You give me your shield for protection,
your right hand upholds me,
and your help makes me great.

³⁷ You enlarge the space before me,
my step will not falter.

³⁸ I pursue my enemies and overtake them,
I do not turn back till I have destroyed them.

³⁹ Thrusting them through,

I do not give them time to rise;
 they fall under my feet.
⁴⁰You give me strength for the battle;
 you subdue my adversaries beneath me;
⁴¹you put my enemies to flight
 and destroy those who hate me.
⁴²They cry for help, but no one comes.
 They cry to the Lord; he does not answer them.
⁴³I pulverize them as dust before the wind;
 like mud in the streets I trample them.
⁴⁴You delivered me from my people's quarrels
 and made me head over the nations.
 They came to serve me – people I have not known.
⁴⁵At 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.
⁴⁷The Lord 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 Lord, 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.”

PSALM 19 (18)

This psalm is an invitation to sing the glory of God. This is manifested by the wonders of the heavens, especially the sun (vv. 1-7), and the Law (vv. 8-15). These two parts were doubtless, in former times, two different psalms.

The order in the vault of the sky is like a symphony. Do we know how to listen to it? Do we join other creatures in praising God our Creator? Do we perceive also the melody of the gospel message (Rom 10:18)? The Law of the Lord is *more precious than gold*, and *sweeter than honey*, it speaks to us of God and invites us to submit ourselves totally to him.

19:15. The term *redeemer* signified “avenger.” It also means savior.

In the “Imitation of Christ,” there is

The Lord, sun of justice. 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.

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.

a section indicating other marvels of God:

Happy the one who listens to the Lord when he speaks to us interiorly, accepting from his lips the word of life and of happiness!

Happy the eyes that are closed to what is spectacular so as to be more attentive to the interior vision!

Recollect yourself in this way, my soul, shut the door of your senses, so that you may hear what the Lord, your God says to you.

- ⁸The law of the Lord is perfect:
it gives life to the soul.
The word of the Lord is trustworthy:
it gives wisdom to the simple.
- ⁹The precepts of the Lord are right:
they give joy to the heart.
The commandments of the Lord are clear:
they enlighten the eyes.
- ¹⁰The fear of the Lord is pure,
it endures forever;
the judgments of the Lord are true,
all of them just and right.
- ¹¹They are more precious than gold –
pure gold of a jeweller;
they are much sweeter than honey
which drops from the honeycomb.
- ¹²They are a light to your servant,
in keeping them they win a great reward.
- ¹³But who can discern one's own errors?
Forgive the failings of which I am unaware.
- ¹⁴Preserve me from willful sin;
do not let it get the better of your servant.
Then shall I walk blameless
and innocent of serious sin.
- ¹⁵May the words of my mouth
and the meditations of my heart
find favor in your sight,
O Lord – my redeemer, my rock!

PSALM 20 (19)

The people pray to God for his king in difficult times. This psalm invites us not to count too much on our own feats, but much more on the power of God. What the psalm says is doubtless valid for our politicians.

May the Lord protect those who struggle to bring about the kingdom of truth, just as he protected Christ, our King.

Prayer of the Jews for their king.

- ²May the Lord answer you in the day of distress;
may the name of Jacob's God give you protection.
- ³May he send you help from the sanctuary
and give you support from Mount Zion.
- ⁴May he remember all your oblations
and look favorably on your burnt offerings.
- ⁵May he grant you your heart's desire
and fulfill all your plans.
- ⁶In your victory let us shout for joy
and raise our banner in the name of our God.
May the Lord grant all your requests.
- ⁷Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed;
he has answered him from his holy heaven
with victories from his right hand.
- ⁸Some boast of chariots, some of horses;
but we boast in the name of the Lord our God.

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

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

PSALM 21 (20)

Thanksgiving for our king. He asked you for life and you have given it: he will live for ever.

²The king rejoices in your strength,
O Lord, and exults in your saving help.

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

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.

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

⁷You have given him eternal bless-
ings, and gladdened him with the joy of
your presence.

⁸The king trusts in the Lord, and

through the love of the Most High, he
will not be shaken.

⁹Your hand, O Lord, 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 Lord, in your
strength! We will sing in praise of your
might.

PSALM 22 (21)

The prayer of Christ on the cross.

²My God, my God, why have you
forsaken me? Why are you so far from
me, from the sound of my groaning?

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.

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.

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

⁸All who see me make a jest of me;
they sneer and shake their heads.

⁹“He put his trust in the Lord, let the
Lord rescue him! If the Lord is his
friend, let him help him!”

• **21** The preceding psalm asked help for the king; this psalm in turn gives thanks for the victory gained. We know how to ask, but do we know how to thank?

When we read the Bible, it seems that with so many of God's blessings, the kings of Israel should have had more success than they did. The Word of God is true: God's friends discover with surprise that if they persevere in fidelity, God works marvels for them.

• **22** This prayer is a passage from night to day. The first part is gloomy, the second is like a sunrise which gives new life and puts joy in the heart of humans. It is the long lament of the persecuted, who, on the edge of the abyss are given assurance and certitude.

From the beginning, Christian tradition has applied this psalm to Jesus himself. In fact, we find here the passion of Jesus: the *bulls*, the *lions*, the *dogs* are the enemies; *only a worm*, it is the humiliation of blows and the infamy of the cross; and his clothes were divided just as he said.

Jesus himself made this psalm his own when from the cross he uttered this cry: “My God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus himself felt he had appealed to God in vain... And yet, in the midst of this terrible darkness, a light in the soul of Jesus does not waver. He knows that in spite of this silence, the Father is always with him and all the second part of the psalm is a song of trust which ends in a cry of triumph.

The Crucified of Good Friday is transformed to the

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

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

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

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

¹⁴their mouths open, like lions roaring for their prey.

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

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

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

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

¹⁹dividing my garments among them and casting lots for my raiment.

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

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

²²Rescue me from the jaws of the lion, my soul from the horns of the wild bull.

²³I will proclaim your name to my brothers, I will praise you in the assembly,

²⁴“All you who fear the Lord, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him! All you sons of Israel, revere him!

²⁵For 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.”

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

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

²⁸The whole earth will acknowledge and turn to the Lord; the families of nations will worship him.

²⁹For dominion belongs to the Lord and he reigns over the nations.

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 the Lord to coming generations; ³²they will announce his salvation to a people yet unborn, “These are the things that he has done.”

PSALM 23 (22)

The good shepherd. *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.* The table and the cup of Christ are before me. I have received better than the anointing of holy oil, that of the Spirit (Jn 2:27). It is not the repose of death that I await but the resurrection that brings me to the Father.

Your rod, your staff: one is to open a way through the undergrowth, the other to defend the flock.

¹The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside the still waters,

³he restores my soul.

Glorious Lord and his reign will be universal. Jesus had said: “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself.”

Christian life is a passage from death to life. What is marvelous is that through Jesus we can always bring

good from evil, happiness from suffering and even from death.

^{22:26.} *I will fulfill my vows:* it is a matter of sacrifices and of thanksgiving.

^{22:27.} It is an allusion to the banquet that God has prepared for his elect: Is 25:6; Lk 22:30.

He guides me through the right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴ Although 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.

⁵ You spread a table before me
in the presence of my foes.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup is overflowing.

⁶ Goodness 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 earth and its fullness belong to the Lord. A procession goes forward towards the Temple: the Israelites carry the Ark of the Covenant to the place where God himself, the Creator of the universe, will dwell in their midst.

Lift up, O gateways, your lintels, open up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may enter! Let us contemplate this mystery. The All-powerful comes to live among us and reside in the humble dwelling place we prepare for him. He becomes man in the womb of Mary.

Who is this King of glory? On the day of his resurrection and ascension, Christ became the King of glory. He went up to the Holy Mountain and was the first to enter the eternal dwelling place of God. All those who share his upright life and seek God with a sincere heart will follow Jesus in glory and share his eternal happiness.

24:2. Allusion to the vision the Israelites had of the world: the earth was like a disk resting on columns.

24:10. Yahweh Sabaoth, or Yahweh of the armies, the armies of celestial spirits, and also the armies of Israel.

The destiny of humankind. God created the universe to display his riches but the world is not completed, until God has visited humankind, and the New Man, the Son of God has revealed himself.

The earth and its fullness belong to the Lord,
the world and all that dwell in it.

² He has founded it upon the ocean
and set it firmly upon the waters.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PSALM 25 (24)

Calling on God in trials. The Bible 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.

To you, O Lord, 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 humbled; those who turn away from you will suffer disgrace!

⁴Teach me your ways, O Lord; make known to me your paths.

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 Lord, your unfailing love from of old.

⁷Remember not the sins of my youth, but in your love remember me.

⁸Good and upright, the Lord teaches sinners his way.

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

¹⁰The ways of the Lord are love and faithfulness for those who keep his covenant and precepts.

¹¹For the sake of your name, Lord, forgive my iniquity, for it is great.

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

¹³They will live in prosperity, and their descendants will inherit the land.

¹⁴The Lord gives advice to those who revere him and makes his covenant known to them.

¹⁵My eyes are always on the Lord, for he will free my feet from the snare.

¹⁶Turn to me and have compassion, for I am lonely and afflicted.

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

¹⁸See my pain and sufferings, and forgive all my sins.

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 Lord, is in you.

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

PSALM 26 (25)

Prayer of the just. 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.

Declare me innocent, O Lord, for I have lived with integrity; I have put my trust in the Lord, I shall never waver.

²Prove me, O Lord, put me to the test; examine my soul and my heart.

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;

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,

⁷singing hymns of praise and

• **25** *Remember your compassion, O Lord, your unfailing love from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth.* The love of God for us has been eternally expressed by the blood of Jesus. God will never forsake his people. Every mass

celebrates this covenant between God and us in the blood of Jesus.

• **26** *I wash my hands*, such was a liturgical act; it is a way of expressing the absence of faults.

thanksgiving and proclaiming your wondrous deeds.

⁸O Lord, 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 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 Lord, in your assemblies.

PSALM 27 (26)

In the struggles of this life, the believer is not discouraged because she clings to the hope the Lord has in store for her 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.

I will place the victor like a column in the sanctuary of my God. I will write on him the name of my God and my own new name (Rev 3: 12).

Close to God, there is no fear. *It is your face, Lord, that I seek... I hope to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*

¹The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?

The Lord 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.

⁴One thing I ask of the Lord, 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.

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 the Lord.

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

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

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!

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

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

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 the Lord
in the land of the living.

¹⁴Trust in the Lord, be strong and courageous
– yes, put your hope in the Lord!

PSALM 28 (27)

O my Rock, do not be deaf to my call!

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

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.

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

⁴Punish them for their evil designs
and wicked deeds; give them their due
reward. ⁵Since they have no regard for

the works of the Lord, he will tear them
down and never let them rise again.

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

⁷The Lord 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.

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

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

PSALM 29 (28)

The storm: the Lord is passing. God speaks through the
tempest. It is there that he shows his power and his glory.

It only takes a big storm to let us
know the limits of our powerful or-
gans and our liturgies. The psalm
begins with a call to the *sons of God*,
that is, to the celestial beings who
form God's court. The people of the
Old Testament had not renounced the
assembly of the gods of their pagan
neighbors, but since Yahweh reigned
above them all, these were no more
than angels and cosmic powers.

¹Give the Lord, O sons of God,
give the Lord glory and strength,
²give the Lord the glory due his name;
worship the Lord in great liturgy.

³The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord thunders over vast waters.

⁴How powerful is the voice of the Lord,
How splendidous is the voice of the Lord.

⁵The voice of the Lord tears up the cedars,
the Lord is shattering the cedars of Lebanon.

⁶He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild bull.

⁷The voice of the Lord breaks forth with flashes of
fire,

⁸the voice of the Lord makes the wilderness quake,
The Lord is shaking the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹The voice of the Lord makes the oaks shudder,
the Lord strips the forests bare,
and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

¹⁰Over the flood the Lord was sitting;
the Lord is king and he reigns forever.

¹¹May the Lord give his people strength;
may the Lord bless his people with peace!

PSALM 30 (29)

I will praise you because you have freed me. 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 gives favors, we dare not believe them to be true.

²I extol you, O Lord, for you have rescued me; my enemies will not gloat over me.

³O Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.

⁴O Lord, you have brought me up from the grave, you gave me life when I was going to the pit.

⁵Sing to the Lord, O you his saints, give thanks and praise to his holy name.

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."

⁸Yet it was you, O Lord, who made

me stand on the rock; as soon as you hid your face, I wavered!

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

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

Would my dust give you praise?

Would it prove your faithfulness?

¹¹Hear, O Lord, and have mercy on me; O Lord, 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.

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

PSALM 31 (30)

I seek refuge in you, Lord. *Into your hands I commend my spirit.*

²In you, O Lord, I take refuge, may I never be disgraced; deliver me in your justice.

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;

⁵free me from the snare that they have set for me. Indeed you are my protector.

⁶Into your hands I commend my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

• **30** Verse 10, mentions what had become the scandal of believers. Is it possible that the dead go forever to this underworld (they called it Sheol) and that God who is so faithful might forget them?

• **31** Luke attributes these words to Jesus on the cross. A little further on we find other words, "You are my God," which are also in Psalm 22, and closely linked to the Passion. It will be our last hope at the moment of death.

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

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.

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

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.

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

¹⁵But I put my trust in you, O Lord, 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.

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

¹⁸Let me not be dishonored, O Lord, 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!

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 the Lord for his wonderful love! He has strengthened my heart.

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 the Lord, all you his saints! The Lord preserves his faithful, but he fully requites the arrogant.

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

PSALM 32 (31)

It is good to clarify what was not really sin but caused guilt. On the other hand, nothing is gained in denying a fault and still less a sin. In Christian language, sin signifies that we committed a wrong not with a law but towards 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. When we ask God to heal someone, we do not separate health of body from health of soul. It is what the following prayer for the anointing of the sick expresses:

Jesus, our Savior, we ask you, through the power of the Holy Spirit to cure the illness from which this person suffers, heal his wounds, pardon his sins, rid him of all that torments his body and soul; give him

Relief after the confession of sin. Buried sin ruins our conscience. Confession is always a liberation.

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

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

³When I kept my sin secret,
my body wasted away,
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 the Lord I will now confess my wrong.”

again spiritual and physical health so that, healed through your goodness, he may return to his work.

And you, you forgave my sin,
you removed my guilt.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PSALM 33 (32)

This psalm opposes the *projects* of nations, what they *thought*, and the projects of God, what he thinks (vv. 10-11).

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.

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

God's Providence watches over us always. Happy the nation that has the Lord for God! The Lord watches over those who fear him.

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

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

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

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

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

⁶ The heavens were created by his word,
the breath of his mouth formed their starry host.

⁷ He gathered the waters of the sea into a heap,
and stored the deep in cellars.

⁸ Let the whole earth fear the Lord,
let the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

⁹ For he spoke and so it was,
he commanded, and everything stood firm.

¹⁰ The Lord frustrates the plans of the nations
and brings to nothing the peoples' designs.

¹¹But his plan stands forever,
 and his heart's design through all generations.
¹²Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord –
 the people he has chosen for his inheritance.
¹³The Lord looks down from heaven
 and sees the whole race of mortals.
¹⁴From where he sits he watches
 all those who dwell on the earth –
¹⁵he who fashions every heart
 observes all their deeds.
¹⁶A king is not saved by a powerful army,
 nor a warrior rescued by his great strength.
¹⁷Don't think that a horse will save you;
 its great strength does not assure victory.
¹⁸But the Lord's eyes are upon those who fear him,
 upon those who trust in his loving-kindness
¹⁹to deliver them from death
 and preserve them from famine.
²⁰In hope we wait for the Lord,
 for he is our help and our shield.
²¹Our hearts rejoice in him,
 for we trust in his holy name.
²²O Lord, let your love rest upon us,
 even as our hope rests in you.

PSALM 34 (33)

Taste and see, etc. 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.

²I will bless the Lord all my days;
 his praise will be ever on my lips.
³My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
 let the lowly hear and rejoice.
⁴Oh, let us magnify the Lord,
 together let us glorify his name!
⁵I sought the Lord, and he answered me;
 from all my fears he delivered me.
⁶They who look to him are radiant with joy,
 their faces never clouded with shame.
⁷When the poor cry out, the Lord hears
 and saves them from distress.
⁸The Lord's angel encamps and patrols
 to keep safe those who fear him.
⁹Oh, see and taste the goodness of the Lord!
 Blessed is the one who finds shelter in him!
¹⁰Revere the Lord, all you his saints,
 for those who fear him do not live in want.

¹¹The mighty may be hungry and in need,
but those who seek the Lord lack nothing.

¹²Come, listen to me, my children;
I will show you how to fear the Lord.

¹³If you desire long life,
if you want to enjoy prosperity,

¹⁴keep your tongue from falsehood,
keep your lips from deceit;

¹⁵turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.

¹⁶The eyes of the Lord are fixed on the righteous;
his ears are inclined to their cries.

¹⁷But his face is set against the wicked
to destroy their memory from the earth.

¹⁸The Lord hears the cry of the righteous
and rescues them from all their troubles.

¹⁹The Lord is close to the brokenhearted
and saves the distraught.

²⁰Many are the troubles of the just,
but the Lord delivers them from all.

²¹He keeps all their bones intact,
and none of them will be broken.

²²Evil will slay the wicked;
the enemies of the just will be doomed.

²³But the Lord will redeem the life of his servants;
none of those who trust in him will be doomed.

PSALM 35 (34)

Prayer of a just person when persecuted.

O Lord, attack those who attack me;
fight against those who fight against
me.

²Come to my aid with armour and
shield;

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

⁴Let them be shamed and dishon-
ored, those who seek my life. Let them
be routed and destroyed, those who
plot my ruin.

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

⁶Let their escape path be dark and
precipitous, with the Lord's angel al-
ways at their heels.

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

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

⁹Then will my soul rejoice in the
Lord and exult in his salvation.

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

¹¹False witnesses take the stand, ac-
cusing me of crimes of which I am
innocent.

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁷How long, O Lord, will you look on? Deliver my life, my only one, from these lions. ¹⁸Then I will thank you in the great assembly; I will praise you in the mighty throng.

¹⁹Do not let them gloat over me – those who, unprovoked, have become my foes. Do not let them wink maliciously – those who hate me without cause.

²⁰Sowing discontent with their tongue and mind, they devise false ac-

cusations 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 Lord, who have seen, do not keep silent. Do not stand far from me.

²³Stir yourself up, stand up for my rights and my cause, my God and my Lord!

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

Let them not gloat over me.

²⁵Never give them reason to say, “We have trampled him down!”

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 the Lord, who has justified his servant.”

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

PSALM 36 (35)

The wickedness of the sinner and the goodness of God.

Even the wickedness of sinners urges us to trust in God's goodness.

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.

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.

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

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

⁹In your house they find rich food and they drink from your spring of delight.

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.

• **36** The first part (vv. 1-5) shows us evil as a personified power. The second (vv. 6-13) tells us that the power of God is still greater.

PSALM 37 (36)

Happiness for the just, ruin for the wicked. “Do not get worried when you think of the wicked.” Neither power nor riches give access to the inheritance that God promised to his children.

Do not be annoyed with evil people nor be envious of wrongdoers.

²For they will fade as any green herb and soon be gone like withered grass.

³Trust in the Lord and do good, dwell in the land and live on it.

⁴Make the Lord your delight, and he will grant your heart’s desire.

⁵Commit your way to the Lord; 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 noon-day sun.

⁷Keep calm before the Lord, 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.

⁹Remember this: the wicked will perish, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.

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

¹¹but the humble will inherit the land and enjoy peace in abundance.

¹²The wicked plot against the virtuous and gnash their teeth at them; ¹³but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees their day coming.

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.

¹⁶The little that the righteous possess is better than the abundance of the wicked.

¹⁷For the arms of the wicked will be broken, and the righteous will be upheld by the Lord.

¹⁸The Lord watches over the lives of the upright; 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 the Lord 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 the Lord blesses; but those whom the Lord curses he will cut off.

²³The Lord is the one who makes people stand, he gives firmness to those he likes. ²⁴They may stumble, but they will not fall, for the Lord 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 secure forever.

²⁸For the Lord 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.

• **37** The psalm is addressed not only to believers, but to a people of God concerned about its land.

Do not be discouraged when others cause you difficulties; or when they multiply little vexations intended to make you leave. Keep calm and have

courage. The children of a people who lives in solidarity and believes in God’s promises will be masters one day.

Time works for God; the tree that the Father did not plant will be uprooted. History turns against those who impose their truth.

³¹His steps have never faltered, for the law of God is in his heart.

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

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

³⁴Hope in the Lord 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 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.

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

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

PSALM 38 (37)

Prayer in time of trouble. When illness or misfortune comes, we begin to reflect; we then discover that the greatest misfortune is to be a sinner.

²O Lord, 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 Lord, 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 Lord; you will answer for me, Lord 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.

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 Lord, stay not far from me, O my God.

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

• **38** The third of the so-called seven Penitence Psalms: Ps 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143. The greater the sin, the greater must be our trust in God.

I confess my transgression, I repent of my sin (v. 19). The Old Testament does not clearly distin-

guish sin from misfortune: if someone is sick and has trials, it is surely because there is a debt with God. In theory, of course, it is not true: beware of guilt when things go wrong for us! In fact, the sick person is always a sinner; his weakness will help him to know the truth.

PSALM 39 (38)

We are nothing before God. 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.*

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"Lord, 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 Lord, 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 Lord, 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."

PSALM 40 (39)

The Bible tells me to do your will. The Letter to the Hebrews (10:5) places on the lips of Jesus verses 7-9 which express his perfect obedience. May we also be able to say: "Here I am!"

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

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

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 the Lord.

⁵Blessed is the one who relies on the

Lord and does not look to the proud nor go astray after false gods.

⁶How numerous, O Lord, 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.

⁷Sacrifice and oblation you did not desire; this you had me understand. Burnt offering and sin offering you do not require.

• **40.** Two prayers have been combined in this psalm. The first is verses 2-12 (or 13).

With resolve I waited for the Lord. Who speaks in this psalm? If one compares it to the Poems of the Servant (Isaiah 49-53) or to Psalms 22 and 68, it seems that it is not a matter of only one person. The psalm expresses the thanksgiving of the believing minority of God's people, agents of God for the salvation of the world. It is also a fact that in the Bible someone, a savior or the Savior always embodies the people or the faithful group. This psalm then is in a

special way applicable to Christ, even if it expresses the prayer of the people of God in their trials.

Out of the horrid pit he drew me. Many will see and be awed and put their trust in the Lord. The Church is in the hands of God and he will not spare it from trials along the way. Could it, without that, be the instrument of salvation? God asks all of us to accept in different ways this vocation of sacrifice, but it is only perfectly accomplished in the case of Christ: *Then I said, Here I come!*

From verse 14, we have the text of Psalm 70: verse 13 was probably part of it.

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."

¹⁰In the great assembly I have proclaimed your saving help. My lips, O Lord, I did not seal – you know that very well.

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.

¹²Do not withhold from me, O Lord, your mercy; let your love and faithfulness preserve me constantly.

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.

¹⁴May it please you, O Lord, to rescue me. Make haste, O Lord, to help me!

¹⁵May those who seek my life be brought to shame and disgrace; may those who want me destroyed be turned back in confusion.

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 your saving grace continually say, "The Lord is great."

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

PSALM 41 (40)

Prayer of an abandoned sick person. Sick, ridiculed, betrayed: such is the one who 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; the Lord delivers him in time of trouble.

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

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

⁵I have pleaded, "O Lord, 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 tell their comments.

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 Lord, 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 the Lord, the God of Israel,
from all eternity and forever!
Amen. Amen!*

PSALM 42 (41)

An exiled Levite, a priest remembers with what joy he went in the past on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. We, too, are exiles here below, as long as we do not see the face of God. It is well that we are not too quickly satisfied with a few beautiful ceremonies.

When shall I go to contemplate the face of the Lord? In exile, the psalmist remembers the years of grace.

²As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
³My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I go and see the face of God?
⁴Day and night my tears have been my food,
as people ask me day after day,
“Where is your God?”
⁵Now as I pour out my soul,
I remember all this –
how I used to lead the faithful
in procession to the house of God,
amid shouts of joy and thanksgiving,
among the feasting throng.
⁶Why are you so downcast, my soul,
why so troubled within me?
Hope in God, for I will praise him again,
my savior and my God.
⁷My soul is downcast when I remember
from these lands of Jordan and Hermon,
“Where are you, small mountain?”
⁸Deep calls to deep as your cataracts thunder;
your waves and torrents have gone over me.
⁹May the Lord bestow his love by day,
by night his song is upon my lips –
a prayer to the God of my life.
¹⁰I say to God, my rock,
“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.

PSALM 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?

Continuation of the previous psalm. Here we have the fervent prayer that the believer – immersed in adversity – addressed to God in order not to waver in his faith.

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

² You are my God, my stronghold,
why have you cast me out?

Why should I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?

³ Send 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.

⁴ Then 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.

⁵ Why 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.

PSALM 44 (43)

National lament. The believing people has suffered a defeat and complain to God.

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

⁴ For 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.

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

⁶ Through you we batter down our

• **44** Everywhere, including Christian countries, Christians are only a minority among a mass of people of other religions, or far removed from faith in Christ. That is why we remember with nostalgia other times when everyone professed the same faith and took part in religious celebrations.

The Jews were in a similar situation when this psalm was written. It must have been the time of the Maccabees, when a minority of believers were trying to uplift Israel in the face of Syrian persecution and the resignation of the majority.

In a poetical contrast, the psalmist opposes the failure of the faithful troops to the triumphant conquest of Palestine, six centuries earlier when the Israelites left Egypt under the leadership of Moses and Joshua (vv. 2-9).

Verses 10-17: These humiliated people express anguish at having lost God himself: he no longer does the wonders he did before to prove that he alone is God.

Yet this passionate complaint (vv. 24-25) is not without hope: the psalmist is convinced that God is all-powerful and his love is faithful (v. 27). It is the same for us. We have good reason to be discouraged: how many counter testimonies! how many apostolic efforts that seem to fail; how God seems to let his Church get stuck in the mud of old, lifeless structures! How the mission to the masses has been forgotten! Will God not come back? Whatever may be the responsibility of Christians in the actual situation, God still knows how to draw a greater good from it.

foes; through your name we shatter our enemies.

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.

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

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

¹¹You have let our enemies drive us back and our adversaries plunder us.

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

¹³You have handed us over to them for nothing; the sale was of no benefit for you.

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.

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.

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.

²³For your sake we are slain all day and accounted as sheep for slaughter.

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

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.

²⁷Come to our help, deliver us for the sake of your kindness.

PSALM 45 (44)

This psalm could have been written on the occasion of the marriage of a king of Israel with a foreign princess, but 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. Verses 13-16 take up the same expressions that we find in Isaiah 60-62.

All this can apply to the Church and to each of us also. Baptism was nothing less than a total gift to Christ. For our part the gift remained with words and gestures, but we already belonged to him and a whole life is not too long for that to become a reality.

Listen, O daughter, pay attention; forget your father's house and your nation. When marriage takes place, much has to be abandoned. Here, it is the same: one day God will be all for all, but to reach that, one has

For the king's wedding. Human love is a mystery that touches the mystery of God himself. God wishes to be united with humanity as a husband to his wife: he has already done so in the person of Christ.

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.

³You are the finest among all others, your lips are anointed with graciousness, for God has blessed you forever.

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.

to forget country and family, one must change one's way of thinking and one's habits for those of God.

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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.

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

PSALM 46 (45)

This psalm is one of those that recall the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem in the time of Isaiah (Is 36–37).

We will not fear... though the mountains quake and totter. The Hebrew poetry always associates nature and political events. The history of Israel has been a troubled history: marked by internal crises and enemy invasions. Yet, it is not a chaotic history. This history is guided by an invisible hand, powerful and tender – the hand of God.

A river brings joy to the city of God. The pool of Shiloah, where the water entered through a tunnel in the interior of the ramparts assured the life of the city at the time of a siege: symbol of the secret protection of God. Ezekiel will recall the source which flows out of the Temple, symbol of life and fecundity.

God is with us. *A river whose streams bring joy to the city of God.* To the upheavals mentioned in the first stanza the psalmist contrasts a vision of tranquility, the Holy City, Jerusalem, the Church.

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

³We will not fear, therefore, though the earth be shaken and the mountains plunge into the seas,
⁴though its waters foam and roar, though the mountains quake and totter.

For the Lord 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.

⁶God is within, the city cannot quake, for God's help is upon it at the break of day.

He has put an end to wars. The spiritual Israel (the Church) will be there again to proclaim the wonders of God when the armies and imperial powers will have fallen.

At the sound of his voice, the earth melts away. And it is still true when God feels at home with us: if we had many reasons to fear, suddenly the scene changes and all is certitude and peace.

⁷ Kingdoms tottered, nations were in turmoil;
at the sound of his voice the earth melts away.

⁸ For with us is the Lord of hosts,
the God of Jacob, our refuge.

⁹ Come, see the works of the Lord –
the marvelous things he has done in the world.

¹⁰ He has put an end to wars,
broken the bows and splintered the spears,
set the shields and chariots afire.

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

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

PSALM 47 (46)

To the king of all the nations. The Lord comes at the end of time to begin his reign.

² Clap your hands, all you peoples;
acclaim God with shouts of joy.

³ For the Lord, the Most High, is to be feared;
he is a great king all over the earth.

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

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

⁶ God ascends amid joyful shouts,
the Lord amid trumpet blasts.

⁷ Sing praises to God, sing praises!
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!

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

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

¹⁰ The 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.

PSALM 48 (47)

The Church-Zion: mountain of God. Zion is the other name for Jerusalem, the Holy City. God favored it and protected it on several occasions. Let the faithful rejoice: God watches over it!

² Great is the Lord,
most worthy of praise in the city of God,
his holy mountain.

³ Beautifully elevated, it is the joy of all the earth
– Mount Zion, heavenly mountain,

the city of the great King.

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;
they panicked and took to flight.

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

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

⁹As we have heard, so have we seen,
in the city of the Lord 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.
Your right hand is ever victorious.

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

¹³Walk around Zion, count her towers,

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 irresponsibility of the rich. “Beware of every desire to possess, for even when one has everything, it is not possessions which give life.”

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.

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?

• **48** This psalm, like Psalm 46, mentions the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem.

The holy mountain, the text reads: Mount Zion in the far north – ancient traditions considered the

mountains of the north as the residence of the gods.

Walk around Zion: this refers, perhaps, to the very ancient religious practice of walking around a sanctuary and touching the wall.

⁸For no ransom avails for one's life,
there is no price one can give to God for it.
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?
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.
¹³People of wealth have no thought,
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.
¹⁶But God will rescue my soul from the grave
by receiving me unto himself.
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.
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.
²¹People of wealth have no thought,
they will be silenced like the beasts.

PSALM 50 (49)

Serve God with a sincere heart. 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.

¹ The God of gods, the Lord has spoken,
he summons the earth from the rising of the sun to
its setting.
² God has shone from Zion, perfect in beauty.
³ God is no longer silent, he comes;
before him is a devouring fire,
around him a raging storm.

• **50** For a long time, it has been a subject of reflection and discussion for the people of God to know what, in God's eyes is more important: the

offering of sacrifices or keeping the Law? The psalm demands honoring God with sacrifices, but clearly gives priority to an upright life.

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.”

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!

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.

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.

¹⁵Call on me in time of calamity;
I will deliver you, and you will glorify me.”

¹⁶But God says this to the wicked:
“What right have you to mouth my laws,
or to talk about my covenant?

¹⁷You hate my commands
and cast my words behind you.

¹⁸You join a thief when you meet one;
you keep company with adulterers.

¹⁹You have a mouth of evil
and a deceitful tongue.

²⁰You speak ill of your brother,
and slander your own mother’s son.

²¹Because 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.

²²Give this a thought, you who forget God,
lest I tear you to pieces with no one to help you.

²³Those who give with thanks offerings honor me,
but the one who walks blamelessly,
I will show him the salvation of God.”

PSALM 51 (50)

For certain people, Christians included, the word “sin” is out of date. Sin is only a weakness of our nature or the product of evil social structures and so the remedy lies with doctors, psychiatrists and sociologists. The cross of Jesus is there: it is a sign of the existence of sin and its total destruction.

Not for nothing has God educated the people of the Old Testament throughout the centuries, giving them a sense of sin. This psalm has kept the ancient terms: *guilt, sin, fault, evil actions* but has gradually put aside what came from fear, or what was a failure to observe the law, in order to point out what was essential: that which is *evil in your sight* and which is a betrayal of God who loves us.

You desire truth in the heart! To recognize sin is to enter into truth. A *broken spirit* will be the proof of our love. The cry to God to give us a *pure heart* will be the expression of our faith.

In your great love, O Lord, have mercy on me. God is not loved, or he is poorly loved. The experience of pardon is the door which gives access to knowing God, as will be said in Romans 5–6. And the result of this will be that the Spirit of God will be given to us, making us *steadfast and joyful*.

Deliver me from the guilt of blood. The evil or the crimes we have committed make us fear death: we carry it within us. From this comes the desire of reparation, to start again, to save others. *I will teach them your ways.* That will depend more on God than on us.

This psalm refers to the adultery of David (2 S 11): it was in fact written much later when God’s people in general became aware of the experience of its sin. At the end it reaffirms that the God of truth is not interested in our religious gestures if our inner being has not been deeply moved. Such an affirmation was at that time difficult to accept and that is why someone wanted to correct it by adding verses 20–21 so as not to shock the good people who came to pray in the Temple.

The whole psalm breathes an atmosphere of serenity (10–14) because God does not want the death of the sinner, but rather that he may live. The sinner, pardoned and sure of God’s constant pardon, will be the witness of divine mercy in an embittered and pessimistic world.

When in the Church, we receive the sacrament of pardon, 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.

Have mercy on me, Lord. Let us admit our sin before the God of truth. Our humiliation will not be without hope, since we know God is able to give us a new heart.

³ Have mercy on me, O God, in your love.
In your great compassion blot out my sin.

⁴ Wash me thoroughly of my guilt;
cleanse me of evil.

⁵ For I acknowledge my wrongdoings
and have my sins ever in mind.

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.

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.

⁹ Cleanse me with hyssop and I shall be clean,
wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.

¹⁰ Fill me with joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

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 Lord, 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.

PSALM 52 (51)**God will destroy the wicked person.**

³Why boast of your wickedness, strong man? Why boast all day long ⁴that you are plotting crimes?

Your tongue is like a sharp razor; ⁵you love evil more than good, and falsehood more than truth. ⁶You love words that inflict harm, O you deceitful tongue!

⁷But 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.

⁸The 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.”

¹⁰But I am as a green olive tree that thrives in the house of God: I trust in God’s unfailing love forever and ever.

¹¹I will praise you forever for all you have done, and proclaim your good name before the faithful ones.

PSALM 53 (52)**The world without God.**

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)

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.

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!

⁸Freely will I offer sacrifice to you and praise your name, O Lord, for it is good.

⁹You have delivered me from calamity, and I look down on my foes.

• **52** The psalmist asks God to do justice against an oppressor. The fall of an unjust system is a judgment of God, but we know that it is not only a question of a group of good people confronting a wicked group.

• **53** This psalm is almost identical to Ps 14.
 • **54** In verse 1, we see that the *name* of God and his strong intervention are almost identical (see Mk 16:17; Acts 3:6; Phil 2:9). If we place our trust in the name of Jesus, our prayer will not be in vain.

PSALM 55 (54)

Prayer of the persecuted. The supremacy of money, violence, luxury, prostitution and the exploitation of people. In the midst of a perverted society, the just feel trapped and threatened. Cast your care upon the Lord.

²Listen to my prayer, O God, do not be deaf to my pleading; ³give heed to me and answer me.

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.

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.”

¹⁰O Lord, shatter their plans. In the city I see strife and violence; ¹¹day and night they prowl about its walls, while inside, evil prevails.

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.

¹⁶Let death come upon them sud-

denly, let them go down to the grave alive, for within them evil and mischief thrive.

¹⁷But in God I seek refuge; the Lord will rescue me.

¹⁸Morning, evening, and even at noon, I cry out my grievance and moan; surely he will hear my voice.

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.

²¹My friend has attacked his associates and has violated his pact with them.

²²His words were smoother than butter, yet war was in his heart; his utterances, more soothing than oil, were swords ready and drawn.

²³Place your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you, for he never allows the upright to fall.

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 Lord.

PSALM 56 (55)

The just will not fall. Prayer of the millions of oppressed who live, and no doubt will die crushed. You, Lord, have gathered our tears!

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,

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.

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?

¹⁰My enemies turn back when I call on you for help; now I know that God is for me.

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.

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.

PSALM 57 (56)

O Lord, I live in the midst of lions.

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.

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.

⁵I lie prostrate in the midst of lions that greedily devour people, their teeth are pointed spears and arrows, their tongues, sharpened swords.

⁶Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Your glory be over all the earth!

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.

⁸My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make music.

⁹Awake, my soul, awake, O harp and lyre! I will wake the dawn.

¹⁰I will give thanks to you, O Lord, 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!

PSALM 58 (57)

God judges judges. God denounces leaders who establish and maintain a corrupt order instead of being agents of his justice.

²You gods, are your decrees just, and are your judgments upright?

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.

⁷Break the teeth in their mouths, O God; tear out the fangs of the lions, O Lord.

⁸Let them vanish like spilled water; let them be trodden down like grass that withers.

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!

¹¹The upright will rejoice when they are avenged; they will bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked.

¹²Then will people say, "Surely the righteous are rewarded; surely there is a God who gives judgment on earth."

• **58** The rulers and those responsible for social justice are called *gods* because they represent God in carrying out their functions.

PSALM 59 (58)**The city is in the hands of the violent.**

²Deliver me from my enemies, O God, from those who rise up against me.

³Deliver me from evildoers; rescue me from the bloodthirsty.

⁴Look, they lie in wait for my life; the mighty conspiring against me, for no fault of mine, O Lord.

⁵I have done them no wrong, yet they prepare to attack me. Rise and help me, look on my plight, ⁶O Lord God of hosts, God of Israel! Arise and punish the nations; have no mercy on the wicked traitors.

⁷Each evening they return, howling like dogs, prowling about the city. ⁸To their mind, God does not hear or see their wicked deeds.

⁹But you, O Lord, laugh at them; you look down upon the wicked.

¹⁰O my Strength, I look up to you, for you, O God, are my fortress.

¹¹My loving God will come to help

me and let me see my enemies fall.

¹²But slay them not, lest my people forget; just shake them by your power, and bring them down, O Lord, 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.

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)**Petition after a defeat.**

³O God, you have rejected us and have broken our defenses; you have been angry, but now turn back to us.

⁴You have shaken the land and torn it open; mend its cracks for it totters.

⁵You have made your people suffer; you have given us wine that makes us stagger.

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.

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?

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.

¹⁴With God we will gain victory; he will crush the enemy for us.

PSALM 61 (60)

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.

⁵Let me dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in your wings' shelter.

⁶Indeed you have heard my vows, O God, and the wish of those who fear your name.

⁷Increase the days of the king's life; prolong his years for many generations.

⁸May he ever be enthroned in God's presence; let your love and loyalty watch over him.

⁹So I will sing praises to your name and fulfill my vows day after day.

PSALM 62 (61)

Still another psalm that seems far removed from believers in peaceful countries. 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.

God has spoken one word, and I have heard two things. God revealed at the same time two of his dominant qualities: *power* and *goodness*.

My soul rests in God alone. God has revealed two of his dominant qualities: power and goodness. Would we like them to be active? Let us believe and open our hearts.

²My soul finds rest in God alone; from him comes my salvation.

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 bless, but in their hearts they curse.

⁶Find rest in God alone, O my soul; from him comes my hope.

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.

⁹Trust in him at all times, my people; pour out your hearts before him; God is our refuge.

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.

¹¹Do not set your heart on extortion, nor your hopes upon corrupt gain. Even if wealth accumulates, keep your heart detached.

• **59** Is God far from evil places? Does he do nothing there? Is there no prayer, no witness which can move them?

• **60** Perhaps it is difficult for us to understand this psalm. The people have been humiliated and are complaining to God that it is his fault. Then, in the Temple, a priest or a prophet proclaims a comforting message from God: he is going to war and his arms will be the tribes of Israel: Gilead, Ephraim, Judah... and

he will trample the neighboring countries... Edom, Moab...

• **61** The king of Israel has trouble and he says his prayer or someone says it for him. How much, perhaps, do we ask of God daily, for house, husband, children and the cat. God knows it is better not to hear everything but it pleases him that we want to call on him: in fact, he is all that we lack.

¹²God has spoken one word,
and I have heard two things:
that power belongs to God,
¹³and yours, O God, is also mercy:
you reward each one according to his deeds.

PSALM 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 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.

My soul thirsts for you. Contrast between daily life, so often tedious, and the experience of God discovered in solitude.

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.

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 bless you as long as I live,
lift up my hands and call on your name.

⁶As with the richest food my soul will feast;
my mouth will praise you with joyful lips.

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.

⁹My soul clings to you,
your right hand upholds me.

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.

All who swear by God's name will boast:

"At last slanderers' tongues have been silenced."

PSALM 64 (63)

Punishment for those who slander.

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.

⁶They invite each other to evil-do-
ing, they conspire to lay snares, saying,
"No one will see us, ⁷who will uncover
our scheme?"

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

• **64** *Everyone will stand in awe.* We should not despise the fear of God, unless we belong to those perfect people who have become pure love of God. A child is not educated without correction. The great

majority of humans are not angels, and they need to see that justice is effective. How many people have seen the justice of God rise in the eastern countries! Ask him to let it rise in our western world.

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.

¹¹The upright will rejoice and take refuge in the Lord; the upright of heart will glory in him.

PSALM 65 (64)

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.

You visit the earth and fill it with abundance. Thanksgiving for the harvest of a fertile year.

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.

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.

⁷By your power you set up the mountains.

⁸By your strength the seas were calmed; you lull their roaring waves and the turmoil of the nations.

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.

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.

¹¹You drench the furrows in the land and level the ridges, you soften the soil with showers and bless its crops.

¹²You crown the year with your goodness; abundance flows everywhere.

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.

PSALM 66 (65)

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).

Thanksgiving after a struggle. The leader of the community is at the head of the procession: he thanks God who has freed his people of their trials.

Shout with joy to God, all you on earth;
² sing to the glory of his name;
 proclaim his glorious praise.

³ Say to God, “How great are your deeds!
 How formidable your power
 that makes your enemies cower!

⁴ All the earth bows down to you,
 making music in praise of you,
 singing in honor of your name.”

⁵ Come and see God’s wonders,
 his deeds awesome for humans.

⁶ He has turned the sea into dry land,
 and the river was crossed on foot.
 Let us, therefore, rejoice in him.

⁷ He rules by his might forever,
 his eyes keeping watch on the peoples,
 his arm holding the rebels in check.

⁸ Praise our God, O nations,
 let the sound of his praise be heard,
⁹ for he has preserved us among the living
 and kept our feet from stumbling.

¹⁰ Why did you test us, O God;
 and refine us like silver?

¹¹ You let us fall into the snare;
 you burdened us with disgrace.

¹² You allowed a nobody to rule over us,
 and we have gone through fire and water,
 but you have brought us to safety at last.

¹³ I will bring offerings to your house
 in fulfillment of my vows –

¹⁴ Those I made when assailed with troubles.

¹⁵ I will offer holocausts of fatlings,
 sending up smoke of burning rams,
 and a sacrifice of goats and bulls.

¹⁶ All you who fear God, come and listen;
 let me tell you what he has done.

¹⁷ I cried aloud to him,
 extolling him with my tongue.

¹⁸ If I had nurtured wickedness in my heart,
 then he would not have heard.

¹⁹ But God has listened;
 he gave heed to my prayer.

²⁰ May God be blessed!
 He has not rejected my prayer;
 nor withheld his love from me.

PSALM 67 (66)**All the nations will know you.**

²May God be gracious and bless us;
 may he let his face shine upon us,
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!

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!

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.

PSALM 68 (67)

Triumphal procession of the God of victories. To the eyes of the believer, the history of the Church is a new triumphal march. The risen Christ present through his Spirit leads her to heaven, where he has prepared a place for her.

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.

⁴But let the righteous be glad and
 exult before God;

let them sing to God and shout for
 joy.

⁵Sing to God, sing praises to his
 name; open the way to him who rides
 upon the clouds; the Lord is his name.
 Rejoice in his presence.

⁶Father of orphans and protector of
 widows – such is our God in his holy
 dwelling.

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.

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 messen-
 gers: “The Lord has shattered an
 army!” ¹³The kings and their armies
 flee, yes, they flee, they flee!

¹⁴A woman at home divides the
 spoils: wings of dove covered with sil-
 ver, their pinions with shining gold.

• **68** We have here a very ancient psalm, fairly picturesque, although in certain places the text may be obscure, having been badly preserved.

This psalm was sung in processions going up to Jerusalem. The faithful knew God was with them and the procession was like the entry of the triumphant God into his Temple.

This explains the images we find in this psalm. The Lord God has come from Sinai to the Holy Land, mounted on the clouds, or on the cherubim. He has been at the side of his people, and his miracles in the

desert startled nature (vv.9-10). The enemy kings are defeated: this is a reference to the victory of Deborah at the torrent of Kishon (Jdg 4). The psalmist then remembers the choice of God’s mountain, Jerusalem (vv. 16-17). This choice causes jealousy in the great mountains.

All ends with a vision of the future full of hope. God who rides on the clouds will manifest himself to all the nations. In the liturgy, this psalm is used for the Ascension of the Lord.

¹⁵When the Lord routed the kings, snow fell on the Dark Mountain.

¹⁶O mighty mountain of Bashan, high and rugged mountain, ¹⁷why look with envy upon the mountain where God chooses to reign, where the Lord will dwell forever?

¹⁸With myriads of powerful chariots, the Lord came from Sinai into his sanctuary.

¹⁹He ascended the high mountain, leading captives in his train, taking people as tributes, even rebels, to his dwelling.

²⁰Blessed be the Lord, God our savior, who daily bears our burdens!

²¹Ours is a God who saves; our Lord lets us escape from death.

²²But he crushes the heads of his enemies, the hairy crowns of the criminals.

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."

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 Zebulun.

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 beast 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)

The waters reach up to my neck. God's servant almost submerged by the waters of suffering and death calls to the Lord for help. Christ has applied to himself several terms of this prayer. After having been saved from death, he will be the happiness of all who seek God.

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

• **69** The prayer of a believer who, no doubt, would be less a target of mockery and affront from his circle if he were not known as a Christian. *A jealous love of your house devours me, draws insults from those who insult you* (see Jn 2:17). Let us not think

too quickly that if we are persecuted, it is because we are believers; and yet Jesus said that must be. Humiliation – often justified – will accompany the graces and the glory which God gives his children (2 Cor 4:7).

who hope in you, O Lord God of hosts; may I cause no dishonor to those who seek you, O God of Israel

– ⁸since 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.

¹³I have become the talk of those who sit at the gates, the topic of the drunkards' songs.

¹⁴But I pray to you, O Lord, at a time most favorable to you. In your great love, O God, answer me with your un-failing 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 Lord, give me a good answer; in your great compassion, turn to me.

¹⁸Hide not your face from your servant; answer me at once for I am in distress.

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.

²²They gave me poison for food and vinegar to drink.

²³May snares be set for them in their banquets and traps in their sacred feasts.

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,

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.

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 the Lord 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.

³⁴For the Lord hears the needy and does not despise those in captivity.

³⁵Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and whatever moves in them.

³⁶For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah. His people shall dwell in the land and possess it;

³⁷the children of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name will dwell in it.

PSALM 70 (69)

The cry of the persecuted.

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

• **70** This psalm is almost a repetition of Psalm 40:14-18; here, *Lord* is replaced by *God*. This is due to the fact that before they were included in the Bible, the psalms circulated in different collections.

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 the Lord!"

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 of an elderly.

¹In you, O Lord, 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 Lord, 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.

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 Lord, 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."

• **71** We shall have a better knowledge of the love of God at the end of our lives, and it will be easy for us to remember the wonders he worked for us. May God grant us true consolation at the end of our present life.

PSALM 72 (71)

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 towards 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, and it is not for us to wait passively for this reign. God is so thoughtful towards 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.

Verse 8: *from sea to sea*, which means from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea; and the *river* is the Euphrates in the north.

Verse 10: *Tarshish* is the Spain of Gibraltar, the end of the Mediterranean world to the west. *Sheba* and *Seba* represent Arabia and Ethiopia.

Praised be the Lord! (v. 18). Let us remember that our psalms were at first divided into five books and each of these five books ended with a “doxology” – a short formula of praise. See the same at the end of Psalms 41 and 89.

The King of Peace. Waiting for the King of Peace, he who will do justice for the humble. The expectation of universal peace after so much obstinacy in murdering one another.

O God, endow the king with your justice,
the royal son with your righteousness.

² May he rule your people justly
and defend the rights of the lowly.

³ Let the mountains bring peace to the people,
and the hills justice.

⁴ He will defend the cause of the poor,
deliver the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor.

⁵ He will endure as the sun
and as the moon through all generations.

⁶ He will be like rain falling on the fields,
or showers watering the earth.

⁷ Justice will flower in his days,
and peace abound till the moon be no more.

⁸ For he reigns from sea to sea,
from the River to the ends of the earth;

⁹ his foes are crushed before him,
and his enemies lick the dust.

¹⁰ The kings of Tarshish and the islands
render him tribute,

the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts,

¹¹ all kings bow down to him,
and all nations serve him.

¹² He delivers the needy who call on him,
the afflicted with no one to help them.

¹³ His mercy is upon the weak and the poor,
he saves the life of the poor.

¹⁴ He rescues them from oppression and strife,
for their life is precious to him.

¹⁵ May he live long,
may gold from Sheba be given him.
May people always pray for him,
and blessings be invoked for him all day.

¹⁶ May grain abound throughout the land,
waving and rustling as in Lebanon;
may cities teem with people, as fields with grass.

¹⁷ May his name endure forever;
may his name be as lasting as the sun.
All the races will boast about him,
and he will be blessed by all nations.

¹⁸ *Praised be the Lord, 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.*

PSALM 73 (72)

“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.

How suddenly they are destroyed the wicked disappear while God leads his friends to share his glory.

Yet I am always with you. 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

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.

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.

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.

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.
“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

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.

Then I perceived their approaching doom.

¹⁸ You place them on slippery ground
and make them fall into the pit.

¹⁹How suddenly they are destroyed,
completely swept away in terror!

²⁰As one awakes from a nightmare,
so when you arise, O Lord,
you shake them off like a dream.

²¹When 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)

Arise, Lord and defend your cause! What a mystery for our faith: the silence of God in face of our follies!

O God, have you rejected us forever? Why vent your anger on the sheep of your own fold?

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.

⁷They defiled your sanctuary and set

afire 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.

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?

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

• **74** The great trials and persecutions at the time of the Maccabees had been a challenge to God: could he not and should he not act? It is the same in those places where the Church is really persecuted. With

verse 14, we find the ancient legends about creation: God split in two the sea monster, the wicked goddess Rahab, and thrown her to the sea turtles to be eaten.

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.

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 Lord, 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)

God will come to judge. Through the cross and resurrection of Christ, God has already judged the world; to the just he has given the assurance that they will triumph.

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 the Lord is a cup of spiced and foaming wine; he pours it out for the wicked to drain to the dregs.

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)

After a victory. 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.

²God is now famous in Judah, in Israel his name is great.

³Salem is indeed his tent; he has made Zion his dwelling place.

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 the Lord, your God,
 and fulfill them; let the peoples
 bring offerings to the Fearsome One,
¹³who breaks the spirit of rulers,
 and is formidable to the kings of the earth.

PSALM 77 (76)

I remember the deeds of the Lord. 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.

²I cry aloud to God – aloud that he may hear me.

³In the day of trouble I seek the Lord, and stretch out my hand untiringly, my soul refusing to be consoled.

⁴When I think of God I sigh; when I meditate my spirit fails.

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 wonders,

⁸“Will the Lord keep silent forever? Will he never show his favor again?”

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 the Lord; 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.

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.

• **77** *The Most High no longer acts as before.* The psalmist meditates on God’s marvels in the past, and then returns to his own time. It would seem that God abandons his people in the midst of insoluble difficulties. The fact is that the past is seen more beautiful than it was, even in the Bible. Similarly, the actual crises in the Church could be seen as collapse, but the next generation will find that there has been a resurrection. Likewise, in the life of every believer,

there are moments when God reveals himself and lifts us, and others when he asks for our fidelity even though he offers no encouragement.

I remember the deeds of the Lord, I recall his marvels of old. We say with Paul: “Why will God, who has given his Son for us, not give us all with him?” Let us remember our past, the past of our nation and of our Christian community and let us search to discover God’s patience and to see in our misfortunes the

PSALM 78 (77)

How many times did they tempt God! This psalm draws a lesson from the history of Israel: God's blessings and the ingratitude of his people.

Give heed, O my people, to my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth!

²I will speak in parables, I will talk of old mysteries ³which we have heard and known, which our ancestors have told us.

⁴We will not keep them hidden from our children; we will announce them to the coming generation: the glorious deeds of the Lord, his might and the wonders he has done.

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.

¹⁰It is because they did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by his law.

¹¹They forgot the marvels he had done, ¹²what their ancestors had seen in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan.

¹³He divided the sea and led them across; he made the water stand like a wall.

¹⁴By day he led them with a cloud, and by night with a fiery light.

¹⁵In the desert he split rocks to give them abundant drink.

¹⁶He made streams come out of a rock and caused water to flow like a river.

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 the Lord 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.

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.

²⁵They ate and had more than their fill of the bread of angels.

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,

³¹God's anger rose against them; he slew the strongest among them and laid low the flower of Israel.

consequence of our sins. In particular, the division of Christians into so many churches should make us feel that we have not been faithful to the teaching of Christ.

• **78** *Ephraim... Jacob... Joseph.* We must not forget that for centuries, Israel was divided into two kingdoms. The strongest, the one in the north called the kingdom of Israel, considered itself the true heir of

the ancestor Jacob-Israel, and the chief tribe was that of Ephraim, son of Joseph.

Doubtless the psalm was written in this kingdom before it disappeared. When it was again taken to the Temple of Jerusalem, in the kingdom of Judah, verses 67-72 were added. The first part showed the disobedience of the people in the north, and then ended with the kindness of God for those of the south – for us, of course, who are still here.

³²In spite of all this, they kept on sinning and did not believe,

³³so he swept away their days suddenly as a storm, and their years in terror. ³⁴When he slew them, they repented and sought him earnestly.

³⁵They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High, their redeemer.

³⁶But they flattered him with their mouths, they lied to him with their tongues, ³⁷while their hearts were unfaithful; they were untrue to his covenant.

³⁸Even 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.

³⁹He remembered that they were but flesh, a breeze that passes and never returns.

⁴⁰How often did they rebel against him in the wilderness, how often did they grieve him in the desert!

⁴¹Again and again they tested him, and provoked the Holy One of Israel.

⁴²They did not remember his power in redeeming them from the oppressor; ⁴³neither his marvels shown in Egypt nor his wonders in the fields of Zoan, ⁴⁴when he turned the rivers to blood and the oppressors had nothing to drink.

⁴⁵He sent swarms of flies that devoured them, frogs that devastated them.

⁴⁶He gave their crops to the caterpillar and their produce to the locust.

⁴⁷He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamores with frost.

⁴⁸He struck their herds with plague and their flocks with thunderbolts.

⁴⁹He unleashed his fury against them, his wrath, indignation and strife – a band of destroying angels.

⁵⁰Giving vent to his anger, he did not spare them from death, but gave them over to the plague.

⁵¹He struck down Egypt's firstborn,

manhood's firstfruits in the tents of Ham.

⁵²Then he led forth his people like a flock, and guided them like sheep through the desert.

⁵³He 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.

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.

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.

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.

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)

How long will your anger last? Let God do justice to his people. The Lord owes us nothing since we are sinners.

O God, the pagans have invaded your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple and reduced Jerusalem to rubble.

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 faithful 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.

⁵How long will this last, O Lord? Will you be angry forever? Will your wrath always burn to avenge your rights?

⁶Pour out your anger on the nations that do not acknowledge you; on the kingdoms that do not call on your name.

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.

¹¹Listen to the groans of the prisoners; by the strength of your arm, deliver those doomed to die.

¹²Return our neighbors sevenfold, O Lord, 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.

PSALM 80 (79)

Let your face shine on us! God is our shepherd: has he forgotten his people? When the Church is discredited, the salvation of Christ seems to be a failure. Lord bring us back and convert us!

²Listen, O shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock, you who sit enthroned between the cherubim.

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 Lord of hosts, how long will your anger burn against the prayers of your people?

⁶You have fed them with the bread of

• **79** Here again is a psalm born of the religious persecution at the time of the Maccabees. The Bible liked to consider the psalms as prayers composed by David. When the apostles quote a psalm, they say: "God said through the mouth of David..." The psalms are in fact the prayer of a people that lived and suffered.

This psalm reminds God that his honor is at stake: what does he think? Are we ready to accept that the

glory of God includes failure and and at times, humiliations for his people?

• **80** This psalm refers to the years of trial for the kingdom of Israel at the time of Elisha. Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh were the more important tribes of the northern kingdom. In the former century, it extended from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates (v. 12).

Verse 18 refers to the King.

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.

⁸Restore us, O God of hosts; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.

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,

¹²its branches reached out to the sea and its shoots to the River.

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 Lord 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 Lord, God of hosts; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

PSALM 81 (80)

Open your mouth and I shall fill it. “If my people would listen to me, I would subdue their enemies.” We lack dynamism to evangelize and change the world: this is because we still have idols even in our apostolate planning.

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 feastday when the moon is full.

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.

⁸You called in distress, and I saved you; unseen, I answered you in thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah.

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,

¹¹for I the Lord 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.
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 the Lord 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.”

PSALM 82 (81)

God assembles the *gods* of the world, those who, at the head of the nations share the task of supreme judge. God reminds them of the sacred rights of the people. The rulers are also mortals and will have to render an account.

All the earth's foundations are shaken. The Bible does not separate the physical from the moral world. The evil of humans destroys the order of nature and brings about disasters.

Sons of the Most High (v. 6). In many places the biblical text mentions the “sons of God.” This hebraic expression could be translated “divine beings” and most of the time refers to angels. The rulers have been called to share the dignity of those heavenly spirits but God’s judgment may deprive them of it.

God judges the judges.

God presides in the divine council;
he gives judgment among the gods:

²“How long will you judge unjustly
and show partiality to the wicked?”

³Give justice to the weak and the orphan;
defend the poor and the oppressed.

⁴Rescue the helpless and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

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.”

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)**Everyone is against us.**

²Do 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.

⁴Craftily 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 forgot-
ten!”

⁶With one heart they devise a
scheme and form an alliance against
you: ⁷the people of Edom and the Ish-

maelites, Moab and the progeny of
Hagar,

⁸Gebal and Ammon and Amalek,
Philistia, with the people of Tyre.

⁹Those from Sur are in league with
them and lend support to Lot’s descen-
dants.

¹⁰Deal with them as you did with
Midian, with Sisera and Yabin at the
river Kishon;

¹¹they perished at Endor and be-
came dung for the ground.

• **83** Verses 10-13 refer to the wars of liberation of Israel at the time of the Judges (chaps. 4 and 7).

¹²Make 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 Lord, that they may seek your name.

¹⁸Let them be dismayed and abashed forever; let them perish in disgrace.

¹⁹Let them know that you alone, whose name is the Lord, are the Most High over all the world.

PSALM 84 (83)

Every believer is a pilgrim in search of the eternal homeland. Sometimes we feel the need to join the great marches and pilgrimages when people both relive and reaffirm their faith.

Happy are those who live in your house: the priests and Levites in charge of celebrations and music.

I would rather be left at the threshold... Better to sleep outdoor in the courtyard of the Temple than ask a citizen of Jerusalem for lodging – one who might be arrogant and unable to share the joy of a pilgrim.

I want to see the living God. The joy of the pilgrimage and of going up to the Temple.

²How lovely are your rooms,
O Lord of hosts!

³My soul yearns, pines,
for the courts of the Lord.
My heart and my flesh
cry out for the living God.

⁴Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God!

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.

⁸They go from strength to strength
till they appear before God in Zion.

⁹O Lord 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 the Lord God is a sun and a shield;
he bestows favor and glory.
The Lord withholds no good thing
from those who walk in uprightness.

¹³O Lord of hosts,
blessed are those who trust in you.

PSALM 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, happiness.

This return of the exiled Jews, however, was only one step towards 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 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 so much that 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.*

Salvation comes from God, but it 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.

Justice and peace have embraced. The salvation that God brings us is a marriage between heaven and earth, a shared project between God and humans. Christ is simultaneously the plenitude of God and the fruit of the earth.

²You have favored your land, O Lord;
you have brought back the exiles of Jacob.

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.

⁶Will your anger be ever with us,
carried over to all generations?

⁷Will you not give us life anew,
that your people may rejoice in you?

⁸Show us, O Lord, your unfailing love
and grant us your saving help.

⁹Would that I hear God's proclamation,
that he promise peace to his people,
his saints – lest they come back to their folly.

¹⁰Yet his salvation is near to those who fear him,
and his Glory will dwell in our land.

¹¹Love and faithfulness have met;
righteousness and peace have embraced.

¹²Faithfulness will reach up from the earth
while justice bends down from heaven.

¹³The Lord will give what is good,
and our land will yield its fruit.

¹⁴Justice will go before him,
and peace will follow along his path.

PSALM 86 (87)

Prayer in affliction. The servant of God, worn out by trials and anguished by death, implores the help of the One who is pure goodness.

Listen, O Lord, and answer me, for I
am afflicted and needy.

²Preserve my life for I am God-fearing;
save your servant who trusts in you.

³Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I
cry to you all day.

⁴Bring joy to the soul of your servant,
for you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

• **86** Here is a very tranquil psalm, without cursing and cries of anguish: *the son of your handmaid* has enemies, of course, but in the setting of a small town. But his sorrow is no less great because of that.

We add here some verses from the Imitation of Christ: Christ calls us to share his anguish.

Many are in love with my kingdom, but few are ready to carry my cross.

Many want my consolation, but few want my tribulations. I find many companions at my table, but few to share my privations.

Everyone would like to rejoice with me, but few wish to suffer with me.

Many follow me to the breaking of bread, but few to drinking the cup of my passion.

Many venerate my miracles, but few are devoted to the ignominy of my cross.

Many love me as long as they are without trials.

Many praise me and bless me as long as they receive favors.

⁵You are good and forgiving, O Lord, caring for those who call on you.

⁶Listen, O Lord, to my prayer, hear the voice of my pleading.

⁷I call on you in the time of my trouble for you will answer me.

⁸None is like you among the gods, your works are beyond compare.

⁹All the nations you have made will come; they will worship before you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name.

¹⁰For you are great, and wonderful are your deeds; you alone are God.

¹¹Teach me, O Lord, how to walk in your truth, that my heart may fear your name.

¹²I give thanks to you, O Lord my God; I will glorify your name forever,

¹³for great has been your love for me, you have saved me from the grave.

¹⁴O God, the insolent are against me; a band of cut-throats, evildoers who do not hold you in reverence.

¹⁵But you, O Lord God, are merciful, slow to anger, loving and faithful.

¹⁶Turn to me, take pity on me; give your strength to your servant, and save the child of your handmaid.

¹⁷Give me a sign of your grace, that my foes may see to their disgrace, that you, O Lord, are my help and comfort.

PSALM 87 (86)

Here so-and-so was born. God passes in review the people of all races and inscribes them in his book as true children of his holy city. *But of Zion it shall be said:* She is the mother. The new Jerusalem is the Church, the mother of all. Mary, mother of the Savior, is the image of the Church; she is also the mother of all the faithful.

We should not say that the people of every religion belong to the Church without knowing it. Only at the end of history, the Church will be at the center of all the problems of humanity. It is only in the after-Church that all will take part in the song and dance.

God loves the gates of Zion. The psalmist recalls that God has chosen Jerusalem-Zion as the capital of his people and the mother of the nations.

He himself has built it in his holy mountain;

²the Lord 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 the Lord notes in the people's register: "All these were also born in Zion."

⁷And all will dance and sing joyfully for you.

PSALM 88 (87)

Prayer of the sick person close to death. It would seem that knowing Christ, we cannot sink into despair. There are, however, days when heaven is closed for us as it was for Jesus in his agony.

²O Lord, 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.

But if I hide and leave them for a while, they complain and sink into depression.

On the other hand, those who love me for my own sake and not because of a particular interest, bless me in time of trial and anguish of heart, just as in their time of great joy.

• **88** A psalm that seems quite pessimistic. Yet the sick person has not lost confidence. The vision he has of the "beyond death," that which the Jews themselves had up to a short time before the coming of Jesus, was hardly encouraging (vv. 5, 10, 12).

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.

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 Lord.

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 Lord, I cry for help; every morning I pray to you.

¹⁵O Lord, 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.

PSALM 89 (88)

Your love and your fidelity. God is faithful: he directs history and he guides our lives according to his promises which never fail.

²I will sing forever, O Lord, 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.”

⁶The heavens proclaim your wonders, O Lord; the assembly of the holy ones recalls your faithfulness. ⁷Who in the skies can compare with the Lord; 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 Lord 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.

¹²Yours are the heavens and the earth; you founded the world and everything in it.

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.

¹⁶Blessed is the people who know

• **89** Love and fidelity are the theme of this psalm. These two dominant qualities of God are emphasized throughout the Bible. *Love* or grace, goodness, tenderness, mercy; *fidelity* or loyalty, truth. The day after the great defeats, the author of this psalm remembers God's promises: Where is the Savior-King who is to

give glory and prosperity to his people? Similarly today, the believer sometimes asks: Lord, what has happened to your promises? Why is there no bread for your children? Where is your justice? Why does your Church not live the Gospel?

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 the Lord; the God of Israel is our shield.

²⁰In the past you spoke in a vision; you said of your faithful servant:

“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.

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.’

²⁸I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.

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,

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 endure as the sun before me.

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.

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.

⁴⁷How long, O Lord, 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 Lord, where is your former great love, the faithfulness you pledged to David?

⁵¹Remember, O Lord, 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 the Lord forever! Amen, Amen.*

PSALM 90 (89)

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.

Lord, 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, “Return, O mortals!”

⁴A thousand years in your sight are like a day 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.

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 Lord? 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 the Lord be upon us; may he prosper the work of our hands.

PSALM 91 (90)

The prayer of the pilgrims who pass the night in the patios of the Temple. They are the guests of the Lord and they count on his continual protection.

Night prayer. A prayer that the believer prays with assurance that God protects those who trust in him.

¹You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who rest in the shadow of the Almighty,
²say to the Lord, “My stronghold, my refuge, my God in whom I trust!”

³He will rescue you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence.

⁴He will cover you with his pinions and give you refuge under his wings.

⁵You shall not fear the terror of the night nor the arrows that fly by day,
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 the Lord your refuge,
the Most High your stronghold,
¹⁰no harm will come upon you,
no disaster will draw near your home.
¹¹For he will command his angels
to guard you in all your ways.
¹²They will lift you up with their hands
so that your foot will not hit a stone.
¹³You will tread on wildcats and snakes
and trample the lion and the dragon.
¹⁴“Because they cling to me, I will rescue them,”
says the Lord.
“I will protect those who know my name.
¹⁵When they call to me, I will answer;
in time of trouble I will be with them;
I will deliver and honor them.
¹⁶I will satisfy them with long life
and show them my salvation.”

PSALM 92 (91)

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.

The just will rise like a palm tree. Enthusiasm of the one whose life is built on faithfulness. He has seen the fall of many fortunes and much glory.

²It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
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 Lord,
and I sing for joy at the work of your hands.
⁶How great are your works,
O Lord, how deep your thoughts!
⁷The senseless will not know,
nor will the stupid understand them.
⁸For though the wicked prosper
and evildoers flourish like grass,
they are doomed to vanish for good.
⁹But you, O Lord, are exalted forever.
¹⁰Time will come when your enemies will perish,
evildoers will be scattered.
¹¹You have made me stronger than the wild ox;
you have poured fresh oil on me.
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.

¹⁴Planted in the house of the Lord,
they will prosper in the courts of our God.

¹⁵In old age they will still bear fruit
they will stay fresh and green,
¹⁶to proclaim that the Lord is upright,
“He is my Rock,” they say, “he never fails.”

PSALM 93 (92)

Robed in splendor, the Lord rules. God rules as the Creator of the universe. God reigns in the person of the risen Christ who already redirects the powers of history.

¹The Lord reigns, robed in majesty;
the Lord is girded with strength.
The world now is firm, it cannot be moved.
²Your throne stands from long ago, O Lord,
from all eternity you are.

³The floods have lifted up, O Lord,
the floods have lifted up their roaring,
the floods have lifted up their pounding waves.

⁴Mightier than the thunder of great waters,
mightier than the breakers of the sea,
the Lord on high is mighty!

⁵Your decrees can be trusted;
holiness dwells in your house
day after day without end, O Lord.

PSALM 94 (93)

Against evil rulers. We believe in the redemption, let us also believe in the judgment. But before any judgment, God is the one who cares for all.

¹O Lord God, vengeance is yours; O
God who avenges, show yourself!

²Judge of the world, repay the proud
with what they deserve.

³How long shall the wicked, O Lord,
how long shall the wicked exult?

⁴Pouring out words of arrogance,
evildoers make a show of their insolence.

⁵They crush your people, O Lord,
they oppress your inheritance.

⁶They murder the widow and the
lonely, they massacre the helpless;

⁷“The Lord does not see,” they say,
“the God of Jacob does not care.”

⁸Remember this, you stupid people,
when will you understand, you fools!

⁹He who made the ear, will he not
hear? He who formed the eye, will he
not see?

¹⁰He who rebukes nations, will he
not punish them?

¹¹The Lord knows the thoughts of
humans, that they are a puff of wind.

¹²Fortunate the one you correct, O
Lord, the one you teach your law;

¹³you give them relief from distress
while a pit is dug for the wicked.

¹⁴The Lord will not reject his people
nor will he forsake his heritage.

¹⁵Justice will return to the just, and
the upright will follow in its wake.

¹⁶Who stands up for me against the
wicked? Who stands by me against
evildoers?

¹⁷Had the Lord not helped me, I would
have fallen into the silence of death.

¹⁸No sooner did I say, “My foot is
slipping,” your kindness, O Lord, held
me up.

¹⁹The more worries and trouble assailed me, the more you consoled me.

²⁰You shun wicked rulers who impose injustice by law.

²¹They plot together against the virtuous and condemn the innocent.

²²But the Lord is my stronghold, my God, my rock of refuge.

²³He will repay them for their evil and destroy them for their wickedness; the Lord, our God, will blot them out.

PSALM 95 (94)

Come, sing to the Lord. When we come to praise God, let us prepare to listen to his word; and try to do his will in daily life.

¹Come, let us sing to the Lord,
let us make a joyful sound
to the Rock of our salvation.

²Let us come before him giving thanks,
with music and songs of praise.

³For the Lord is the great God,
the great King above all gods.

⁴In his hand are the depths of the earth
and the mountain heights.

⁵The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hand shaped the dry land.

⁶Come and worship; let us bow down,
kneel before the Lord, our Maker.

⁷He is our God, and we his people;
the flock he leads and pastures.

Would that today you heard his voice!

⁸Do not be stubborn, as at Meribah,
in the desert, on that day at Massah,

⁹when your ancestors challenged me,
and they put me to the test.

¹⁰For forty years they wearied me and I said,
“They are a people of inconstant heart;
they have not known my ways.”

¹¹So I declared on oath in my anger,
“Never shall they enter my rest.”

PSALM 96 (95)

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.

God loves justice.

¹Sing to the Lord a new song,
sing to the Lord, all the earth!

²Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.

³Recall his glory among the nations,
tell all the peoples his wonderful deeds.

⁴How great is the Lord and worthy of praise!
Above all gods he is to be feared.

⁵For all other gods are worthless idols,
but Yahweh is the one who made the heavens.

⁶Splendor and majesty go before him;
power and glory fill his sanctuary.

⁷Give to the Lord, you families of nations,
give to the Lord glory and strength.

⁸Give to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring gifts and enter his courts.

⁹Worship the Lord with holy celebrations;
stand in awe of him, all the earth.

¹⁰Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!"
He will judge the peoples with justice.

¹¹Let the heavens be glad, the earth rejoice;
let the sea and all that fills it resound;

¹²let the fields exult and everything in them;
let the forest, all the trees, sing for joy.

¹³Let them sing before the Lord
who comes to judge the earth.
He will rule the world with justice
and the peoples with fairness.

PSALM 97 (96)

We often find it hard to share the enthusiasm and joy of the psalmist who sees so clearly the world divided between the good and the wicked. We rather see the world covered by a fog where each one has his own excuses and share of wickedness. The confusion is temporary, however, there is good seed and there are weeds, and each one goes towards what he prefers. God hates evil as much as he loves himself, and what cannot return to God should be destroyed.

God reigns and the idols disappear. Already light shines on the just. Already it shines on the person of the risen Christ.

¹The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice;
let the distant islands be glad.

²Clouds and darkness surround him;
justice and right are his throne.

³Fire goes before him,
burning his foes on every side.

⁴His lightning lights up the world;
the earth watches and trembles.

⁵The mountains melt like wax
before the Lord, the Lord of all the earth.

⁶The heavens proclaim his justice,
all peoples see his glory.

⁷Shame on worshipers of idols,
on those proud of their worthless images.
Let all spirits bow before him.

⁸Zion hears and rejoices,
and the cities of Judah exult,
because of your judgments, O God.

⁹For you are the Master of the universe,
exalted far above all gods.

¹⁰You who love the Lord, hate evil,
for he preserves the lives of his faithful,
he delivers them from their foes.

¹¹ He sheds light upon the upright,
and gladness upon the just.

¹² Rejoice in the Lord, you who are blameless,
and give praise to his holy name.

PSALM 98 (97)

Sing a new song to the Lord. Humanity has found the way
to liberation and salvation:

- in the coming of Christ, God-made-man;
- in his resurrection.

¹ Sing to the Lord a new song, for he
has done wonders; his right hand, his
holy arm, has won victory for him.

² The Lord has shown his salvation,
revealing his justice to the nations.

³ He has not forgotten his love nor his
faithfulness to Israel. The farthest ends
of the earth all have seen God's saving
power.

⁴ All you lands, make a joyful noise
to the Lord, break into song and sing

praise, ⁵ with melody of the lyre and
with music of the harp.

⁶ With trumpet blast and sound of the
horn, rejoice before the King, the Lord!

⁷ Let the sea resound and everything
in it, the world and all its peoples.

⁸ Let rivers clap their hands, hills and
mountains sing with joy ⁹ before the
Lord, for he comes to rule the earth. He
will judge the world with justice and the
peoples with fairness.

PSALM 99 (98)

Holy is the Lord!

¹ The Lord reigns and the nations
tremble. He is enthroned upon the
cherubim; the earth gets distraught.

² Great is the Lord in Zion; he is high
over all the nations.

³ May they give glory to your name,
great and terrible: "Holy is he: ⁴ this is
the mighty King who loves justice."

For you come to install fairness, to
establish in Jacob right and justice.

⁵ Extol the Lord, our God; worship at
his footstool. Holy is he! And mighty!

⁶ Among his priests were Moses and

Aaron, and Samuel among those who
called on his name. They called to the
Lord, and he answered them.

⁷ In the pillar of cloud he spoke to
them, and they kept his statutes and
the decrees he gave them.

⁸ O Lord our God, you responded to
them; you were a patient God for them,
but you punished their wrongs.

⁹ Extol the Lord our God; worship at
his holy mountain. Holy is the Lord our
God!

• **99** Yes, he is holy! This exclamation will appear three times in the psalm. Let us take the vision of Isaiah if we want to find the meaning of the word "holy." It signifies, according to some, that God is totally different, removed from what is not "of him": he is the "totally other." That is true. It might be necessary to add here what the word "high tension" means for us: a mysterious power which upsets all our mechanisms, magnetizing all its surroundings, drawing sparks from bodies thought to be inert, striking

down whoever approaches it (2 S 6:7).

This sovereign holiness has a beauty which leaves us speechless with a love that dispels our resistance and oppressive heaviness. It will not prevent God from giving himself totally to us in definitive marriage. The true fear of God, the fascination that his mystery has on us (we shall live it for eternity) has nothing to do with fear or defiance. The formidable aspect of death – necessary for returning to God – helps us to gauge what separates us from him.

PSALM 100 (99)

All the earth acclaim the Lord. Let all the earth sing, and you, serve him with joy.

¹All you lands, acclaim the Lord!
²Serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.
³Know that the Lord is God; he created us and we are his people, the sheep of his fold.

⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name.
⁵For the Lord is good; his love lasts forever and his faithfulness through all generations.

PSALM 101 (100)

A king examines his conscience. I wish to train myself to follow the perfect way, but you, will you come to me?

I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O Lord, I will sing praise.
²I will walk the way of integrity – O Lord, when will you come to me? With a blameless heart I will walk within my house.
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.
⁴I will banish all wicked hearts, and evil I will not know.
⁵He who deals with others treache-

rously, I will silence. He who talks and acts arrogantly, I will not endure.
⁶I will choose from the faithful of the land those who may dwell with me; only the upright shall be my servant.
⁷No double-dealer shall live in my house; no one who utters falsehood shall stand before my eyes.
⁸Each morning I will clear the land and silence all the wicked; I will uproot all the evildoers from the city of the Lord.

PSALM 102 (101)

Prayer in time of affliction.

²O Lord, hear my prayer; let my cry for help come to you.
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.
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.
⁶Because of my great grief I am reduced to skin and bones.
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.
¹⁰The bread I eat is ashes, my drink is mingled with tears, ¹¹for your wrath, your fury; for you have thrown me aside.
¹²My days are vanishing like the shadows at night; I wither away like grass.
¹³But you, O Lord, you sit forever; your name endures through all generations.

• **101** In beginning his daily work, the believer sets out to live according to the truth, to struggle for justice, while hoping for the coming of the Lord.

• **102** This psalm blends two poems: the cry of a

forsaken, sick person, and a prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

Verse 10 says: *The bread I eat is ashes*, which means: I'm fasting, I'm going without bread and I'm covering myself with ashes.

¹⁴ Arise, have mercy on Zion; this is the time to show her your mercy.

¹⁵ For your servants cherish her stones, and are moved to pity by her dust.

¹⁶ O Lord, the nations will revere your name, and the kings of the earth your glory,

¹⁷ when the Lord will rebuild Zion and appear in all his splendor.

¹⁸ For he will answer the prayer of the needy and will not despise their plea.

¹⁹ Let this be written for future ages, "the Lord will be praised by a people he will form."

²⁰ From his holy height in heaven, the Lord has looked on the earth ²¹ to hear the groaning of the prisoners, and free those condemned to death.

²² Then the name of the Lord will be

declared in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem,

²³ when the peoples and the kingdoms assemble to worship him.

²⁴ My walk has exhausted me, he has cut short my days.

²⁵ I cry to him, "My God, do not take my life in mid-course, you whose days are from age to age."

²⁶ In the beginning you laid the earth's foundation, the heavens are the work of your hands.

²⁷ Although they perish, you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment, you change them like clothes: they pass away,

²⁸ but you remain the same, your years unending.

²⁹ Your servants' children will dwell secure; their posterity will endure without fail.

PSALM 103 (102)

The Lord showers his blessings upon you. This psalm looks on God, humans, and God's mercy toward humankind: from these three, praise is born.

¹ Bless the Lord, my soul; all my being, bless his holy name!

² Bless the Lord, my soul, and do not forget all his kindness; ³ he forgives all your sins and heals all your sickness; ⁴ he redeems your life from destruction and crowns you with love and compassion; ⁵ he gives fulfillment to your years, and renews your youth like the eagle's.

⁶ The Lord restores justice and secures the rights of the oppressed.

⁷ He has made known his ways to

Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel.

⁸ The Lord is gracious and merciful, abounding in love and slow to anger; ⁹ he will not always scold nor will he be angry forever. ¹⁰ He does not treat us according to our sins, nor does he punish us as we deserve.

¹¹ As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his love for those fearing him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove from us our sins.

• **103** Because of their origin and their inconsistency, humans are dust. They are also God's creation and God's children. God is all-powerful but his authentic greatness is his infinite capacity to love, to increase the flame of his love from his own fire. God's characteristic is to be mercifully forgiving. In this regard, the psalmist uses a simple but grandiose image: the enormous distance between heaven and earth, the east and the west, is less representative of the greatness of God than of his merciful love. Christians will discover many resonances in this psalm:

– God is indulgent because he knows we are but dust, but also because he wanted to experience the human condition including suffering, death and even temptation.

– His pardon can be seen: the cross of Jesus Christ surmounting the world and history to the end of time.

– His covenant with Israel: definitive and universal.

– All the good that has come to us through Christ goes far beyond what the psalmist had hoped for: the truth of the Gospel and the grace of redemption leading us to eternal life.

– The permanence of the Church, the crowd of witnesses to Jesus Christ, those of yesterday and those of tomorrow, and finally our own experience of God in this life.

These are some of our reasons for hoping in God and for celebrating his immense glory.

¹³As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him.

¹⁴For he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

¹⁵The days of mortals are like grass; they bloom like a flower of the field;

¹⁶but the wind passes over it, and it is gone, his field will not see him again.

¹⁷But the Lord'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.

¹⁹The Lord has set his throne in heaven; he rules, he has power everywhere.

²⁰Praise the Lord, all you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, you who obey his word.

²¹Praise the Lord, all his hosts, all his servants who do his will.

²²Praise the Lord, all his works, everywhere he rules.

PSALM 104 (103)

Not only does all come from God but all belongs to him and speaks 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 vaster, 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 rather as if the world ceased to exist.

Invitation to optimism. All creatures are good and are linked together in harmony. One by one the psalmist names with admiration the great cosmic powers and almost with tenderness the birds, wild animals and fish. This psalm has a deeply human touch: everything exists for the benefit of humanity. Humankind is called to be the consciousness that understands the universe and is able to admire it, the voice that praises the Creator, the artisan called to beautify it and organize it for the service of people, all people. Our psalms and songs of praise would be useless if they did not express human effort to build a world reflecting the purity and infinite riches of God.

"He formed me from of old, from eternity, even before the earth. When

The universe praises its Creator. 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."

¹Bless the Lord, my soul!
Clothed in majesty and splendor;
O Lord, my God, how great you are!

²You are wrapped in light as with a garment;
you stretch out the heavens like a tent,
³you build your upperrooms above the waters.

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.

⁵You set the earth on its foundations,
and never will it be shaken.

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.

¹⁰You make springs gush forth in valleys
winding among mountains and hills,

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.

¹³You water the mountains from your abode

he laid the foundations of the earth, I was close to him, the designer of his works and I was his daily delight, forever playing in his presence, playing throughout the world and delighting to be with humans" (Pro 8:23, 29-31).

and fill the earth with the fruit of your work.

¹⁴You make grass grow for cattle and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth:

¹⁵wine to gladden his heart, oil to make his face shine, and bread to make him strong.

¹⁶The Lord 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.

¹⁸High mountains are for wild goats, the cliffs a refuge for badgers.

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.

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.

²⁴How varied O Lord, 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.

²⁷They all look to you for their food in due time.

²⁸You give it to them, and they gather it up; you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

²⁹When you hide your face they vanish, you take away their breath, they expire and return to dust.

³⁰When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and the face of the earth is renewed.

³¹May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works!

³²He looks on the earth, and it quakes;

he touches the mountain, and it smokes.

³³I will sing to the Lord all my life;
I will sing praise to God while I live.

³⁴May my song give him pleasure,
as the Lord gives me delight.

³⁵May sinners vanish from the earth,
and may the wicked be no more.
Bless the Lord, my soul!

PSALM 105 (104)

The beginning of Salvation History. Remembering the past can be a prayer if we try to see the work of God and thank him for it.

¹Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his works among the nations.

²Sing to him, sing his praise, proclaim all his wondrous deeds.

³Glory in his holy name; let those who seek the Lord rejoice.

⁴Look to the Lord and be strong; seek his face always.

⁵Remember his wonderful works, his miracles and his judgments,

⁶you descendants of his servant Abraham, you sons of Jacob, his chosen ones!

⁷He is the Lord our God; his judgments reach the whole world.

⁸He remembers his covenant forever, his promise to a thousand generations, ⁹the covenant he made with Abraham, the promise he swore to Isaac.

¹⁰He confirmed his decree to Jacob, to Israel his eternal covenant:

¹¹"To you I will give the land of Canaan as part of your inheritance."

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:

¹⁵"Touch not my anointed ones," he warned, "do my prophets no harm!"

¹⁶Then he sent a famine and ruined the crop that sustained the land; ¹⁷he sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave;

¹⁸his feet in shackles, his neck in irons ¹⁹till what he foretold came to pass, and the Lord's word proved him true.

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.

²³Then Israel came to Egypt, Jacob settled in the land of Ham. ²⁴The Lord made his people fruitful and much stronger than their foes, ²⁵whose hearts he turned to hate his people, to deal deceitfully with his servants.

²⁶Then he sent Moses his servant and Aaron whom he had chosen.

²⁷They performed his signs among them, his miracles in the land of Ham.

²⁸He sent darkness to the land, but they rebelled against his words.

²⁹He turned their waters into blood, causing their fish to die.

³⁰Their land teemed with frogs, invading even the king's bedroom.

³¹He spoke, and flies and gnats swarmed throughout the country.

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.

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 firstfruits of their manhood.

³⁷He led Israel out of the alien land, laden with silver and gold, and none were left behind.

³⁸Egypt was glad when they departed, so filled were they with dread.

³⁹He spread a cloud as covering, and fire to give them light at night.

⁴⁰They asked for food; he gave them quails and fed them with bread from heaven.

⁴¹He opened the rock, and water gushed out, flowing like a river through the desert.

⁴²For he remembered his promise to Abraham, his servant.

⁴³So he led forth his people with joy, his chosen ones with singing.

⁴⁴He gave them the lands of the nations, and let them take the fruit of others' toil,

⁴⁵that they might keep his statutes and remain obedient to his laws.

PSALM 106 (105)

Another look at the history of Israel. Like Psalm 78, this psalm contrasts the mercy of God and Israel's rebellions. God punishes but he always gives his grace again.

Alleluia!

¹Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his love endures forever.

²Who can count the Lord's mighty deeds, or declare all his praises?

³Blessed are they who always do just and right.

⁴Remember me, O Lord, 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.

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.

⁸Yet he saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known.

⁹He rebuked the sea, and it dried up; he led them through the deep as on dry land.

¹⁰He saved them from hostility, freeing them from the hand of the enemy.

¹¹Waters covered their pursuers, and none of them was left alive.

¹²Then they believed his promises and all at once sang his praises.

¹³But soon they forgot his works and did not wait for his counsel.

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 the Lord.

¹⁷So the earth opened, swallowed Dathan, and buried the company of Abiram; ¹⁸fire broke out against them, burning up the wicked.

¹⁹They made a calf at Horeb and worshiped the molten image.

²⁰They exchanged the glory of God for the image of a bull that eats grass.

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.

²³So he spoke of destroying them, but Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him to shield them from destruction.

²⁴Yet they despised the promised land, for they had no faith in his word.

²⁵They grumbled in their tents and would not listen to the voice of the Lord.

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.

²⁸They joined the rites of Baal-peor and ate sacrifices to lifeless gods.

²⁹Their deeds provoked the Lord to anger, and a plague broke out among them.

³⁰But Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague came to an end.

³¹This was credited to his uprightness, making him remembered for all ages.

³²Angered by them at Meribah's waters, the Lord took it out on Moses ³³for the rash words he uttered, when they rebelled against God.

³⁴They dared not destroy the pagans, as the Lord commanded; ³⁵they mingled with these nations and learned to do as they did.

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.

⁴⁰The anger of the Lord grew intense and he abhorred his inheritance.

⁴¹He handed them over to the nations, and their foes ruled them with arrogance.

⁴²Brought by the enemy into subjection, they suffered the agony of oppression.

⁴³He delivered them many a time, but they 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.

⁴⁶He let them be pitied by all those who held them captive.

⁴⁷Save us, O Lord, our God, gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to you and praise your holy name.

⁴⁸*Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel, from eternity to eternity. Let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the Lord!*

PSALM 107 (106)

A third look at the history of Israel. Like the two preceding psalms, this one recalls the past, and draws another lesson from it: each time they cried to the Lord, he listened to them. "Let us give thanks for his love."

¹Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his love endures forever.

²Let the redeemed of the Lord 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.

⁴Some strayed in the wilderness and were lost, far away from the city.

⁵They wandered about hungry and thirsty, their lives ebbing away.

⁶Then they cried to the Lord in anguish, and he rescued them from their distress.

⁷He led them by a straight way to a city where they could dwell.

⁸Let them thank the Lord for his love and wondrous deeds for humans.

⁹He quenches the thirst of the soul and satisfies the hunger of the heart.

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.

¹²Their backs bent in hard labor, they fell down, and there was no one to help.

¹³Then they cried to the Lord in anguish, and he rescued them from their distress.

¹⁴He brought them out of the dark

and gloom, and he tore asunder their bonds.

¹⁵Let them thank the Lord for his love and wondrous deeds for humans.

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 the Lord 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 the Lord for his love and wondrous deeds for humans.

²²Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his deeds in joyful song.

²³Those who went to the sea in ships, merchants on the mighty waters, ²⁴saw the marvels of the Lord, 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 the Lord in anguish, and he rescued them from their distress.

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 the Lord for his love and wondrous deeds for humans.

³²Let them extol him in the congregation, praise him in the assembly of the people.

³³He turned rivers into wastelands, flowing springs into parched grounds, ³⁴and fruitful valleys into salt-flats, because of the wickedness of their inhabitants.

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.

³⁷They planted vineyards, they sowed fields, and from them got fruitful harvests.

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.

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.

⁴²The upright see it and are glad, but the wicked are silenced.

⁴³Let the wise consider all this and understand the Lord's infinite love.

PSALM 108 (107)

Song of victory.

²My heart is ready, O God! I will sing praise and make music. Awake my soul!

³Awake, harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn.

⁴I will thank you, O Lord, among the

nations. I will sing praise to you among the peoples.

⁵For great is your love above the heavens, your faithfulness beyond the skies.

⁶Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over the earth.

⁷ Give help and save us by your right hand, and rescue those you love.

⁸ God has spoken in his sanctuary: "In triumph I will divide up Shechem and parcel out the Valley of Succoth.

⁹ Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet, Judah my scepter.

¹⁰ Moab is my washbasin; upon

Edom I cast my sandal; over Philistia I shout in triumph."

¹¹ Who will take me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?

¹² O God! Have you really rejected us? You no longer go with our armies.

¹³ Give us aid against the foe, for the help of mortals is not worth a straw.

¹⁴ With God we will gain victory; he will crush the enemy for us.

PSALM 109 (108)

Have no pity for them. Someone who only had words of friendship has been accused and slandered. He asks justice from God who does not forsake his own. God will show no mercy for those who are merciless.

Break your silence, O God whom I praise, ² now that the wicked and deceitful hurl their false accusations at me.

³ They assail me with words of hatred; they attack me for no valid cause.

⁴ They return my friendship with slander, and yet I pray for them.

⁵ They repay me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

⁶ Appoint 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.

⁸ May his days be numbered, his office be taken by another.

⁹ May his children lose a father and his wife a husband.

¹⁰ May his children go begging, driven out of their ruined homes.

¹¹ May the creditor seize all his belongings and strangers plunder the fruits of his toil.

¹² Let no one extend kindness to him or take pity on his orphaned children.

¹³ May his posterity be destroyed, their names blotted out in the next generation.

¹⁴ May his father's evil be remembered before the Lord; may his mother's sin never be effaced.

¹⁵ May their sins be ever before the Lord, and their memory cut off from the earth."

¹⁶ For he did not remember to show kindness, but hounded the poor, the needy, and the brokenhearted to their death.

¹⁷ He loved to curse; may he be cursed. He loathed blessing; may it be far from him.

¹⁸ He wrapped himself in cursing; may it soak into his body like water, penetrate his bones like oil.

¹⁹ May it be like a garment he wears, like the belt he ties around himself.

²⁰ May the Lord reward my accusers with this, and others who speak evil of me.

²¹ But as for me, O God my Lord, for your name's sake, act on my behalf, deliver me, in the goodness of your love.

²² For I am poor and needy, my heart is stricken within me.

• **109** It is perhaps the psalm that most scandalizes Christians, well-educated as we are. An attempt has been made to change the translation (instead of a curse verses 6-20 would be a charitable way of saying what could happen to the evildoer). It has been excluded from the breviary. Whose fault is it, if it is part of the Bible and the word of God?

We have not yet completely come to the new Gospel age (we continue to kill each other in a "nice way" in Christian countries) and certainly no one has attained it. They all have the right to pray. These curses are a cry to the justice of God who understands them and who – yes, he too – knows how to curse.

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.

²⁵I have become the butt for the scorn of my foes; people shake their heads at me in derision.

²⁶Help me, O Lord my God, and save me for the sake of your love.

²⁷Let them know that this is your hand, that it is you, Lord, who do this.

²⁸They may curse, but you will bless; 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 the Lord, I will give my thanks; I will praise him in the great assembly.

³¹He stands at the right hand of the needy, to save them from those who condemn them.

PSALM 110 (109)

Most probably, this psalm was first written for Simon Maccabee: see the commentary on Melchizedek in Heb 7. It was charged with a prophetic message and we can no longer read it without relating it to Christ.

The Lord said to my Lord. Sometimes we feel we are 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, as the warlike tone of verses 5-6 indicates, who will be victorious over all the hostile powers. *He has lapped up the water from the brook* which is an allusion to Judges 7:4 – the warriors who can cope with trials. The struggle will be hard, but God will finally ask him to sit at his right and all will be subject to him.

“Melchizedek” is the mysterious person in Genesis (14:18) – whose ancestors are not mentioned – but to whom Abraham offered the tenth part of his conquests. Melchizedek, king and priest, is already Christ (Heb 7).

Word of the Lord to my Lord. The basic force ruling history and the destiny of the world is the victory of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who was made man so that we might share his eternal glory.

¹The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand
till I make your foes your footstool.”

²From Zion the Lord 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.

⁴The Lord 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.

PSALM 111 (110)

God creates, saves and guides us.

¹ *Alleluia!*
I thank the Lord with all my heart
in the council of the just, in the assembly.

²The works of the Lord are great
and pondered by all who delight in them.

An alphabetical psalm, the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet begin the twenty-two verses. Other psalms are also written in this way (e.g. Psalms 34; 37; 119).

³ Glorious and majestic are his deeds,
his righteousness endures forever.
⁴ He lets us remember his wondrous deeds;
the Lord is merciful and kind.
⁵ Always mindful of his covenant,
he provides food for those who fear him.
⁶ He shows his people the power of his arm
by giving them the lands of other nations.
⁷ The works of his hands are faithful and just,
trustworthy are all his precepts,
⁸ ordained to last forever,
bearers of truth and uprightness.
⁹ He has sent his people deliverances
and made with them a covenant forever.
His holy name is to be revered!
¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
prudent are those who live by his precepts.
To him belongs everlasting praise.

PSALM 112 (111)

Like the preceding one, this psalm is alphabetical. It uses the same terms, but this time praises the just person, the image of God.

Praise for the just.

¹ *Alleluia!*
Blessed is the one who fears the Lord,
who greatly delights in his commands.
² His children will be powerful on earth;
the upright's offspring will be blessed.
³ Wealth and riches are for his family,
there his integrity will remain.
⁴ He is for the righteous a light in darkness,
he is kind, merciful and upright.
⁵ It will be well with him who lends freely,
who leads a life of justice and honesty.
⁶ For the righteous will never be moved;
he will be remembered and loved forever.
⁷ He has no fear of evil news,
for his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.
⁸ His heart is confident, he needs not fear,
he shall prevail over his foes at the end.
⁹ He gives generously to the poor,
his merits will last forever
and his head will be raised in honor.
¹⁰ The wicked will see this and be furious:
they will gnash their teeth in seething envy.
The desire of the wicked will fail.

PSALM 113 (112)

Poor and humble people, praise the Lord! 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.

¹ *Alleluia!*

Praise, O servants of the Lord,
praise the name of the Lord!

² Blessed be the name of the Lord
now and forever!

³ From eastern lands to the western islands,
may the name of the Lord be praised!

⁴ The Lord is exalted over the nations,
his glory above the heavens.

⁵ Who is like the Lord 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 the Lord!

PSALM 114 (113 A)

The departure from Egypt. The power of God-Savior manifested itself in the first Passover, the departure from Egypt. The resurrection of Christ has touched the universe in a different way.

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?

⁷ Tremble, O earth, at your Master's presence,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,

⁸ who turned the rock into a stream,
and the flint into a spring.

PSALM 115 (113 B)

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.”

God’s people have no idols. Since we have been given to know the one and true God, let us leave aside all that is not God.

¹ Not to us, O Lord, not to us,
but to your name be the glory,
for the sake of your love and faithfulness.

² Why should the pagans say,
“Where is their God?”

³ There in heaven is our God;
whatever he wishes, he does.

⁴ Not so the hand-made idols,
crafted in silver and gold.

⁵ They have mouths that cannot speak,
eyes that cannot see,

⁶ ears that cannot hear,
noses that cannot smell.

⁷ They have hands but cannot feel,
feet, but cannot walk;
neither can they make a sound in their throat.

⁸ Their makers will be like them,
so will all who trust in them.

⁹ O Israel, trust in the Lord;
he is your help and your shield!

¹⁰ You, family of Aaron, trust in the Lord;
he is your help and your shield!

¹¹ You who fear the Lord, trust in him;
he is your help and your shield!

¹² The Lord remembers us and will bless us;
he will bless the family of Israel;
he will bless the family of Aaron;
¹³ he will bless those who fear the Lord,
both the small and the great.

¹⁴ May the Lord shower blessings,
on you and your children as well.

¹⁵ May you be blessed by the Lord,
Maker of heaven and earth.

¹⁶ Heaven belongs to the Lord,
but the earth he has given to humans.

¹⁷ It is not the dead who praise the Lord,
for they have gone down to silence;

¹⁸ but it is we, the living, who bless the Lord,
from now on and forever.

PSALM 116 (114-115)

Jesus prayed this psalm at the beginning of his passion, and certain words take on a different meaning when we relate them to Jesus: *He has saved me from death; I will raise the cup of salvation; the death of his faithful ones is precious to the Lord.* The mass – the presence among us of Christ's sacrifice – is "eucharist" or thanksgiving.

You have freed me from death. "I shall walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living." We sing our thanksgiving with all those God has saved from death, with our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ *Alleluia!*

I am pleased that the Lord has heard my voice in supplication,

² that he has not been deaf to me, the day I called on him.

³ When the cords of death entangled me, the snares of the grave laid hold of me, when affliction got the better of me,

⁴ I called upon the name of the Lord: "O Lord, save my life!"

⁵ Gracious and righteous is the Lord; full of compassion is our God.

⁶ the Lord protects the simple: he saved me when I was humbled.

⁷ Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the Lord has taken care of you.

⁸ He has freed my soul from death, my eyes from weeping, my feet from stumbling;

⁹ I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

¹⁰ I have kept faith even when I said, "I am greatly afflicted."

¹¹ I have said in my dismay, "To hope in humans is vain."

¹² How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?

¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

¹⁴ I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

¹⁵ It is painful to the Lord to see the death of his faithful.

¹⁶ O Lord, I am your servant, truly your servant, your handmaid's son. You have freed me from my bonds.

¹⁷ I will offer you a thanksgiving sacrifice; I will call on the name of the Lord.

¹⁸ I will carry out my vows to the Lord in the presence of his people,

¹⁹ in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem.

PSALM 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.

¹ *Alleluia!*

Praise the Lord, all you nations;
all you peoples, praise him.

² How great is his love for us!
His faithfulness lasts forever.

PSALM 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... A way of repeating the announcement of Isaiah 28:16. Who would dare to do this, if not the risen Christ? (see Mt 21:42; Acts 4:11).

I will not die, I will live! *The stone rejected by the builders has become the keystone.* Jesus applies to himself the symbol of the rejected stone (Mt 21:42; 1 P 2:4), and when he enters the Temple, the children sing: *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

¹ *Alleluia!*

Give thanks to the Lord,
for he is good,
his loving kindness endures forever.

² Let Israel say,
"His loving kindness endures forever."

³ Let the house of Aaron say,
"His loving kindness endures forever."

⁴ Let those who fear the Lord say,
"His loving kindness endures forever."

⁵ In anguish I cried to the Lord;
he answered by setting me free.

⁶ With the Lord beside me I need not fear.
What can humans do to me?

⁷ The Lord is with me, ready to help;
I can look in triumph upon my enemies.

⁸ It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in the help of humans.

⁹ It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in the might of princes.

¹⁰ All the nations surrounded me;
in the name of the Lord I crushed them.

¹¹ They surrounded me on every side;
in the name of the Lord I crushed them.

¹² Like swarms of bees they encircled me;
but like burning thorns they died down;
in the name of the Lord I crushed them.

¹³ I was pushed hard and about to fall,
but the Lord came to my help.

¹⁴ The Lord is my strength and my song;
he has become my salvation.

¹⁵ Joyful shouts of victory
are heard in the tents of the just:
"The right hand of the Lord strikes mightily,
¹⁶ the right hand of the Lord is lifted high,
the right hand of the Lord strikes mightily!"

¹⁷I shall not die, but live
to proclaim what the Lord has done.
¹⁸The Lord 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.
²⁰“This is the Lord’s gate,
through which the upright enter.”
²¹I thank you for having answered me,
for having rescued me.
²²The stone rejected by the builders
has become the cornerstone.
²³This was the Lord’s doing
and we marvel at it.
²⁴This is the day the Lord has made;
so let us rejoice and be glad.
²⁵Save us, O Lord, deliver us, O Lord!
²⁶Blessed is he who comes in the Lord’s name!
We bless you from the house of the Lord.
²⁷The Lord is God; may his light shine upon us.
*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.
²⁹Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!

PSALM 119 (118)

Psalm about the Law. This psalm, the longest in the Bible, repeats without tiring that to follow the word of God is life and happiness.

¹Blessed are they whose ways are upright, who follow the law of the Lord.

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.

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.

¹¹In my heart I have kept your word, that I may not sin against my Lord.

¹²Praise to you, O Lord; instruct me in your statutes, ¹³that with my lips I may declare all your spoken decrees.

¹⁴I delight in following your laws, more so than in all riches.

¹⁵I will meditate on your precepts and concentrate on your ways.

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.

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.

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.

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 Lord, save me from disgrace.

³²I will run in the way of your commands, for you have freed my heart.

³³Explain to me, O Lord, your commandments, and I will be ever faithful to them.

³⁴Give me understanding, that I may observe your law with all my heart.

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.

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 Lord, your salvation as you have promised.

⁴²Strengthened by my trust in your word, I can answer my enemy's reproach.

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.

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.

⁴⁹Remember your word to your servant, your word which has given me hope.

⁵⁰My consolation in suffering is this: that your promise renews my life.

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 Lord.

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.

⁵⁵Each night I call on your name, O Lord, and renew my vow to keep your word.

⁵⁶This has been my practice; I have kept your precepts.

⁵⁷You are my portion, O Lord; 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.

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.

⁶⁴The earth is full of your love, O Lord! Teach me your decrees.

⁶⁵You have been good to your servant, Lord, in accordance with your words.

⁶⁶Give me knowledge and good judgment for I trust in your commands.

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.

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.

⁷²Your law is more precious to me than heaps of silver and gold.

⁷³Give me insight to know your commands, since I have been formed by your hands.

⁷⁴Those who fear you will be glad, seeing that I hope in your word.

⁷⁵I know, O Lord, that your laws are just, and there is justice in my affliction.

⁷⁶Comfort me then with your unfailing love, as you promised your servant.

⁷⁷Let your mercy come to give me life, for your law is my delight.

⁷⁸Humble the arrogant who oppress me as I meditate on your precepts.

⁷⁹Let those who fear you turn to me, they will understand your statutes.

⁸⁰May my heart be blameless in your decrees, that I may not be ashamed.

⁸¹My soul longs for your protection; your word is my hope of salvation.

⁸²I have kept watch for your promise. "When will you comfort me?" I ask.

⁸³I have become as dry as a wine-skin, yet I have not forgotten your statutes.

⁸⁴How long must your servant endure? When will you judge my persecutors?

⁸⁵The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me in defiance of your law.

⁸⁶Your law indeed is trustworthy, when they persecute me, help me.

⁸⁷They have almost put an end to me on earth, and yet I have not forsaken your precepts.

⁸⁸In your kindness give me life, that I may keep your commands.

⁸⁹O Lord, your word stands forever, firmly fixed in the heavens.

⁹⁰Your faithfulness lasts throughout the ages – as long as the earth you created.

⁹¹Your ordinances last to this day for all things are made to serve you.

⁹²If your law had not been my pleasure, I would have perished in affliction.

⁹³Never will I forget your precepts, for with them you give me life.

⁹⁴Save me for I am yours, since I seek your statutes.

⁹⁵The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I look to your word for salvation.

⁹⁶I saw that all perfection is limited but your command is boundless.

⁹⁷How I love your law, meditating on it all day!

⁹⁸Your command – mine forever – has made me wiser than my enemy.

⁹⁹I have more insight than my teachers for I meditate on your decrees.

¹⁰⁰ I have more understanding than the elders for I abide by your precepts.

¹⁰¹ I turn my feet from evil paths, that I may keep step with your word.

¹⁰² I have not departed from your decrees for you yourself have instructed me.

¹⁰³ How sweet are your promises to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

¹⁰⁴ Your precepts have given me knowledge, and I hate all that is false.

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light for my path.

¹⁰⁶ I have taken an oath to keep your just commands.

¹⁰⁷ I have suffered much, O Lord; renew my life according to your word.

¹⁰⁸ Accept my offerings of praise, O Lord, and teach me your decrees.

¹⁰⁹ I am ready to sacrifice my life for your Law that is always in my heart.

¹¹⁰ Though the wicked have laid a snare for me, I do not stray from your precepts.

¹¹¹ Your statutes are my heritage forever, they are the joy of my heart.

¹¹² From age to age, I am determined to fulfill your decrees until the end.

¹¹³ I detest double-dealing people, but I treasure your law.

¹¹⁴ You are my shield, my refuge; my hope is in your word.

¹¹⁵ Leave me, you evildoers; let me keep the commandments of my God.

¹¹⁶ May your promise uphold me that I may live; let me not hope in vain.

¹¹⁷ Support me and I shall be safe, and faithfully keep your decrees.

¹¹⁸ You spurn all who stray from your decrees, for vain is their deceit.

¹¹⁹ You discard all the wicked as dross; that is why I love your statutes.

¹²⁰ My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe before your laws.

¹²¹ I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors.

¹²² Guarantee the well-being of your servant; let not the arrogant oppress me.

¹²³ I strain my eyes searching your saving help, watching for the fulfillment of your just promise.

¹²⁴ Treat your servant with compassion, and instruct me in your decrees.

¹²⁵ Give me knowledge; I am your servant who desires to understand your statutes.

¹²⁶ It is time for you, O Lord, to act, for they have broken your law.

¹²⁷ I love your commandments more than gold – the finest gold.

¹²⁸ Because my steps are guided by your precepts, I hate all false ways.

¹²⁹ Wonderful are your decrees; my soul cannot but keep them.

¹³⁰ As your words unfold, light is shed, and the simple-hearted understand.

¹³¹ I gasp in ardent yearning for your commandments that I love.

¹³² Turn to me then and be gracious as to those who love your name.

¹³³ You promised to direct my steps; free my path from evil.

¹³⁴ Rescue me from human oppression, and help me keep your precepts.

¹³⁵ Favor me with your smile and teach me your statutes.

¹³⁶ My eyes shed streams of tears for those who disobey your law.

¹³⁷ O Lord, you are just, and your judgments right.

¹³⁸ You have pronounced your decrees in justice and faithfulness.

¹³⁹ I burn with zeal, seeing how my foes ignore your words.

¹⁴⁰ Your promises have been tested; therefore our servant loves them.

¹⁴¹ Though I am lowly and despised, I do not forget your precepts.

¹⁴² Your justice is eternal and your Law is true.

¹⁴³ In 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 Lord: help me keep your statutes.

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.

¹⁴⁸I lie awake through the night to ponder on your promises.

¹⁴⁹Hear my voice, in your unfailing love; in your justice, O Lord, preserve my life.

¹⁵⁰My persecutors close in with evil intent; they are far from your Law.

¹⁵¹But you, O Lord, 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 Lord; 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 Lord, 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 Lord, 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 Lord; 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.

¹⁷³Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts.

¹⁷⁴I long for your salvation, O Lord; 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.

PSALM 120 (119)

“Song of Ascent”

The pilgrims who went up to the Temple were not without their troubles: some were not at peace with their neighbors; others complained that they were not living with believers but with pagans. They wanted the

¹I called to the Lord in my distress, and he answered me.

²Deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues.

peace that God gives to those who draw near to him.

The Psalms 120–134 have the same title: “Song of Ascents.” The pilgrims, surely, sang them while going up to the Jerusalem Temple. That is why we find at times an antiphon that the crowd of pilgrims would repeat.

PSALM 121 (120)

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: a conversion, a vocation, the beginning of a family, risks taken for the good of all.

PSALM 122 (121)

A cry of enthusiasm and joy of a pilgrim arriving at the Temple. Admiration for the building, joy in seeing the crowd, and something deeper: a happiness in sharing the experience with other believers.

The Temple is the sign of God’s presence among his people, Jesus found himself there with his Father. For centuries, Christian pilgrims have walked thousands of kilometers to find the places where God has revealed himself, Compostela, Lourdes, Fatima or Medjugorje. It is a fact that true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth (Jn 4:21), but they are still flesh and blood and

³How shall he pay you back,
O deceitful and lying tongue?

⁴He will punish you with arrows
hardened over the glowing coals!

⁵Woe is me who live with barbarians,
and dwell amid plunders.

⁶My soul is sick of dwelling
among those who hate peace;

⁷I want peace,
but they only think of quarrels.

God wTrust in the Lord.

¹Those who trust in the Lord
are like Mount Zion,
immovable, it stands forever.

²As mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the Lord encompasses his people.

³The 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.

⁴Be good, O Lord, to those who are good,
to those who are upright in heart.

⁵But those who turn to crooked ways,
the Lord will drive out with the evildoers.
May peace remain upon Israel.

They will come back in joy carrying their sheaves. The mystery of life springing up from death. Hope for the afflicted, for those who are disappointed because of the little fruit of their labor.

¹When the Lord brought the exiles back to Zion,
we were like those moving in a dream.

²Then our mouths were filled with laughter,
and our tongues with songs of joy.

Among the nations it was said,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”

³The Lord had done great things for us,
and we were glad indeed.

⁴Bring back our exiles, O Lord,
like fresh streams in the desert.

⁵Those who sow in tears
will reap with songs and shouts of joy.

⁶They went forth weeping,
bearing the seeds for sowing,
they will come home with joyful shouts,

God often waits for them at the end of a march without which their effort would not have been a real one. Prayer of the believer who admires the presence of God in the Church, and also of those who seek the joy that accompanies faith.

PSALM 123 (122)

Prayer of the afflicted.

The cry of petition and hope of the Jews who, on returning from exile, are humiliated and despised by their pagan neighbors.

How often in the Gospel do we hear the same cry of the afflicted!

Think especially of the Canaanite woman: "Lord, have pity on me!" She pursues Christ with desperate insistence for she feels it is now or never.

PSALM 124 (123)

With admiration and gratitude, the people of God remember how they overcame their trials because God was with them. An invitation to give thanks. In the Gospel, of the ten lepers who were healed, only one came back to thank the Lord. If we haven't the heart to thank God, it is because we do not know how to discover the wonders in our own life and in the world.

It is strange, that in the communities of the poor and the persecuted, the prayers of thanksgiving are interminable.

bringing their harvested sheaves.

What is built without God is lost time. It is useless spending all our days in search of security for the future, if blind and unresponsive, we pass by the events and joys that the present moment has in store for us.

¹ Unless the Lord builds the house,
in vain do its builders labor.
Unless the Lord guards the city,
in vain does the guard stay awake.

² It 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.

³ Sons are a gift from the Lord;
the fruit of the womb is a reward.

⁴ Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are the sons of one's youth.

⁵ Blessed is the man who has filled
his quiver with arrows of this kind,
their foes will not silence them
when they contend in court.

The blessing of the home. In contrast to those who are anxious and impatient, the believer tries to see the good side of life. He recognizes the blessings God has given his home. A large family is God's blessing for those who have chosen it and have accepted its responsibilities.

¹ Blessed are you who fear the Lord
and walk in his ways.

² You will eat the fruit of your toil;
you will be blessed and favored.

³ Your wife, like a vine,
will bear fruits in your home;
your children, like olive shoots
will stand around your table.

⁴ Such are the blessings bestowed
upon the man who fears the Lord.

⁵ May the Lord bless you from Zion.
May you see Jerusalem prosperous
all the days of your life.

⁶ May you see your children's children,
and Israel at peace!

From its youth, the people of God were persecuted. In the end, their enemies were dispersed, but they remained. To hold on in spite of the difficulties of life is a form of true hope.

PSALM 125 (124)

The pilgrims admire the walls of Jerusalem – high and reinforced. It is an image of God's protection. Prayer 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.

Trust in the Lord.

¹ Those who trust in the Lord
are like Mount Zion,
immovable, it stands forever.

² As mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the Lord 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 Lord, to those who are good,
to those who are upright in heart.

⁵ But those who turn to crooked ways,
the Lord will drive out with the evildoers.
May peace remain upon Israel.

PSALM 126 (125)

Prayer on the return from exile – the great trial of the people. Happiness and surprise at the end of captivity, something that seemed unbelievable: "We thought we were dreaming."

We cannot help thinking of the Virgin Mary: "The Lord has done wonders for me, holy is his name," or of Peter freed from prison. Today, many sow in tears; it is not the same one who sows and who reaps the harvest.

They will come back in joy carrying their sheaves. The mystery of life springing up from death. Hope for the afflicted, for those who are disappointed because of the little fruit of their labor.

¹ When the Lord 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.

Among the nations it was said,
"The Lord has done great things for them."

³ The Lord had done great things for us,
and we were glad indeed.

⁴ Bring back our exiles, O Lord,
like fresh streams in the desert.

⁵ Those who sow in tears
will reap with songs and shouts of joy.

⁶ They went forth weeping,
bearing the seeds for sowing,
they will come home with joyful shouts,
bringing their harvested sheaves.

PSALM 127 (126)

The believer lives life day by day. She does not neglect giving time to prayer, family, friendship and sharing Christian community life. She does not damage health by overworking. She is aware that families with larger incomes and one child who have nothing to share are not always the ones who best make ends meet, and

What is built without God is lost time. It is useless spending all our days in search of security for the future, if blind and unresponsive, we pass by the events and joys that the present moment has in store for us.

¹ Unless the Lord builds the house,
in vain do its builders labor.

Unless the Lord guards the city,
in vain does the guard stay awake.

² It is in vain that you rise early
and stay up late, putting off your rest,

that the richest homes are not the happiest. The Father asks us to work but also wants us to keep the sabbath.

Sons are a gift from the Lord. The Bible does not forget that each one of us has received everything from family and country. Not to pass on life and education to a new generation, is not to pay a debt, for sure, but it is also to lose one's life.

toiling for your hard-earned bread;
God gives it to his loved ones, and they sleep.

³ Sons are a gift from the Lord;
the fruit of the womb is a reward.

⁴ Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are the sons of one's youth.

⁵ Blessed 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)

"Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice and the rest will also be given to you" (Mt 6:33).

The blessing of the home. In contrast to those who are anxious and impatient, the believer tries to see the good side of life. He recognizes the blessings God has given his home. A large family is God's blessing for those who have chosen it and have accepted its responsibilities.

¹ Blessed are you who fear the Lord
and walk in his ways.

² You will eat the fruit of your toil;
you will be blessed and favored.

³ Your wife, like a vine,
will bear fruits in your home;
your children, like olive shoots
will stand around your table.

⁴ Such are the blessings bestowed
upon the man who fears the Lord.

⁵ May the Lord bless you from Zion.
May you see Jerusalem prosperous
all the days of your life.

⁶ May you see your children's children,
and Israel at peace!

PSALM 129 (128)

From its youth, the people of God were persecuted. In the end, their enemies were dispersed, but they remained. To hold on in spite of the difficulties of life is a form of true hope.

¹ How they have oppressed me from my youth –
let Israel say,

² how they have oppressed me from my youth –
they have not put me down.

³ Upon my back plowers have plowed
long and deep furrows

⁴ But the Lord, who is just,
has shattered the yoke of the wicked.

⁵ May all who hate Zion
be thrown into confusion.

⁶May they be like grass in the garden,
which withers before you uproot it.

⁷No reaper sets his hands on it,
no one gathers it to fill his arms,

⁸nor says of them the passersby,
“The blessing of the Lord be upon you!”

We bless you in the name of the Lord!

PSALM 130 (129)

The prayer during a long expectation. Years of a human life, generations perhaps in the life of a nation. Have we already asked for twenty years?

I waited for the Lord; I put my hope in his word. It was true for the Jews expecting national liberation, it is also valid for us: have we received and are we enjoying all that God has promised us?

All has been given us in hope. As the watchman waits for the dawn, so the believer waits for a coming of Christ – the coming that she longs for.

From the depths I cry to you. A penitential psalm, but above all, a prayer of trust in God.

¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,

²O Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears pay attention
to the voice of my supplication.

³If you should mark our evil,
O Lord, who could stand?

⁴But with you is forgiveness,
and for that you are revered.

⁵I waited for the Lord, my soul waits,
and I put my hope in his word.

⁶My soul expects the Lord
more than watchmen the dawn.

⁷O Israel, hope in the Lord,
for with him is unfailing love
and with him full deliverance.

⁸He will deliver Israel
from all its sins.

PSALM 131 (130)

Childlike trust in God. A simple and humble prayer full of trust, which reminds us of the serenity of a child in its mother’s arms. Is not this what Jesus praised and is God less mother than father?

¹O Lord, 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.

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 the Lord, O Israel,
now and forever.

PSALM 132 (131)

Do not forget the descendants of your servant David.

¹Remember David, O Lord, and all his readiness, ²how he swore an oath to the Lord, to the Mighty One of Jacob.

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 the Lord, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob.”

⁶Then came the news, “The Ark is in Ephrathah, we found it in the fields of Jaar.”

⁷Let us go to where he dwells and worship at his footstool!

⁸Arise, O Lord, and come to your rest, you and the ark of your might.

⁹May your priests be arrayed in glorious mantle; may your faithful ones shout in gladness.

¹⁰For the sake of your servant, David, do not turn away the face of your anointed.

¹¹The Lord swore to David a promise, and he will remain true to it: “I will

keep your descendance 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.”

¹³For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling:

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.”

PSALM 133 (132)

This is yet another psalm inspired by the sight of the Temple where the Levites and the priests, the “sons of Aaron,” celebrated the cult together and sang continual praise. There will always be the need of Christian communities vowed to the service of God.

What a marvel: fraternal love! Our unity in God’s service as well as Christian friendship that is lasting and deep are gifts of the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts. “Love and be united so that the world may believe.”

¹How good and delightful to see kindred living together in unity!

²It is like precious oil poured upon Aaron’s head, running down his beard onto the collar of his robes.

³It is like the dew of Hermon coming down the mountains of Zion, where the Lord confers his blessing: life everlasting.

PSALM 134 (133)

At times, Jesus spent the entire 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.

A song of praise. This was perhaps used in the Temple during a night ceremony, when the priests replaced each other in praising God.

¹Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who minister by night in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God.

²Raise your hands to the sanctuary and bless the Lord.

³May the Lord bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth.

PSALM 135 (134)**Praise the Lord who chose us for himself.**

¹ *Alleluia!*

Praise the name of the Lord. O servants of the Lord, ²praise him, you who serve in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God.

³Praise the Lord, for he is good, praise his name, for it is beautiful;

⁴for the Lord has chosen Jacob as his own, Israel as his possession.

⁵I know that the Lord is great, that our Lord is above all gods.

⁶Whatever the Lord pleases, he does – in heaven and on earth, in the seas and in their depths.

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.

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.

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.

¹³Your name, O Lord, will endure forever; your renown, O Lord, throughout the ages.

¹⁴For the Lord vindicates his people and shows mercy to his servants.

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.

¹⁸Their makers will be like them, so will all who trust in them.

¹⁹Bless the Lord, house of Israel; bless the Lord, house of Aaron; ²⁰bless the Lord, house of Levi; bless the Lord, all you who fear him.

²¹Blessed be the Lord from Zion, he who dwells in Jerusalem.

PSALM 136 (135)**Give thanks to the Lord.** Thanksgiving hymn used for the Passover, feast of the liberation of God's people.

¹ *Alleluia!*

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his kindness endures forever.

²Give thanks to the God of gods, his kindness endures forever.

³Give thanks to the Lord of lords, his kindness endures forever.

⁴He alone does great marvels, his kindness endures forever.

⁵In wisdom he made the heavens, his kindness endures forever.

⁶He set the earth upon the waters, his kindness endures forever.

⁷He made the great lights, his kindness endures forever,

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,

¹¹and brought Israel out, his kindness endures forever,

¹²with strong hand and outstretched arm, his kindness endures forever.

¹³He split the Sea of Reeds, his kindness endures forever,

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.

¹⁷He struck down great kings, his kindness endures forever,

¹⁸and killed mighty kings, his kindness endures forever,

¹⁹ Sihon, king of the Amorites, his kindness endures forever,

²⁰ and Og, king of Bashan, his kindness endures forever.

²¹ He gave their land as an inheritance, his kindness endures forever,

²² a heritage to Israel his servant, his kindness endures forever.

²³ He remembered us in our humiliation, his kindness endures forever,

²⁴ and freed us from our oppressors, his kindness endures forever,

²⁵ he who gives food to all creatures, his kindness endures forever.

²⁶ Give thanks to the God of heaven, his kindness endures forever!

PSALM 137 (136)

Could I forget you, Jerusalem?

¹ By the streams of Babylon,
we sat and then wept
as we remembered Zion.

² When on the poplars
we hung our harps

³ our captors asked for song.

Our tormentors wanted songs of joy:
“Sing to us one of the songs of Zion!”

⁴ How could we sing the Lord’s song
in a strange and alien land?

⁵ If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
may my right hand fall useless!

⁶ May my tongue cleave to my palate
if I remember you not,
if Jerusalem is not the first of my joys.

⁷ Remember, Lord, the Edomites
– what did they do when Jerusalem fell?
They said, “Tear the city down,
tear it down to its foundations!”

⁸ O daughter of Babylon, you will be sacked
happy is he who repays you
and does to you what you have done to us!

⁹ Happy is who seizes your infants
and dashes them against the rocks!

PSALM 138 (137)

Your hands lead all for my good. A prayer for the times when we are pleased with God and we would like heaven and earth to share our joy and thanksgiving.

¹ I thank you, O Lord, with all my heart,
for you have heard the word of my lips.
I sing your praise in the presence of the gods.

² I bow down towards your holy temple
and give thanks to your name,
for your love and faithfulness,
for your word which exceeds everything.

³ You answered me when I called;
you restored my soul and made me strong.

⁴O Lord, all kings on earth will give you praise,
when they have heard your words.

⁵They will celebrate the ways of the Lord,
“great is the glory of the Lord!”

⁶From above, the Lord watches over the lowly;
from afar, he marks down the haughty.

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.

⁸How the Lord cares for me!
Your kindness, O Lord, endures forever.
Forsake not the work of your hands.

PSALM 139 (138)

There is a way of contemplating the presence of the all-powerful God which crushes us. There is another way which fills us with assurance. The Bible cannot contemplate this unfathomable mystery of God without immediately coming back to the struggles of the real world: its God has a passion for justice, and the faithful person cannot be satisfied with half-measures or compromise with evil. This accounts for the declaration which shocks some but we can guess its inspiration which is always valid: “I detest them, they are my enemies.” It is actually a hatred of evil.

God everywhere, in all, knows all. A prayer filled with admiration of God’s wisdom: “Everything is exposed and open to the eyes of him to whom we are accountable” (Heb 4:13).

¹O Lord, you know me:

you have scrutinized me.

²You know when I sit and when I rise;
beforehand you discern my thoughts.

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 Lord.

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?

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.

¹³It was you who formed my inmost part
and knit me together in my mother’s womb.

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;
they were all recorded in your book
before any of them came to be.

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.

¹⁹If only you would slay the wicked, O God,
and drive away from me the violent!

²⁰They rebel falseheartedly,
your foes blaspheme your name.

²¹I hate those who hate you, O Lord,
and loathe those who defy you.

²²I hate them deeply,
they have become my foes.

²³Search me, O God, and know my heart;
try me and know my thoughts.

²⁴See if my steps are going astray,
and lead me in your eternal way.

PSALM 140 (139)

Free me from the wicked.

²O Lord, deliver me from the evil
one, protect me from violent people,
³forever plotting evil and stirring up
strife.

⁴They have tongues sharp as a ser-
pent's and venomous lips.

⁵Save me, O Lord, from the hands of
the wicked, preserve me from the
hands of the violent, who have planned
to trip my feet.

⁶The arrogant have set a snare for
me; they have spread out their nets to
entrap me along my path.

⁷I say to the Lord, "You are my God."
Hear, O Lord, my voice in supplication.

⁸O God, my Lord, my strength and
salvation, in the day of battle you shield
my head.

⁹Do not grant, O Lord, 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.

¹¹Let burning coals rain upon them;
let them be cast into the depths, never
to rise again.

¹²Do not let the slanderer thrive on
earth; let disaster hunt down the vio-
lent.

¹³I know that the Lord 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 pres-
ence.

PSALM 141 (140)

Do not lead us into temptation. May God grant us that we resist the seduction of the world around us but that also we listen to those who correct us.

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.

³O Lord, 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.

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 Lord; 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.

PSALM 142 (141)

Prayer during trials. The prayer of someone in the most dire poverty. This psalm is applicable to the passion of Christ and St. Francis of Assisi prayed it when he was dying.

²I cry aloud to the Lord,
in a loud voice I beseech the Lord.
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.

⁵Look to my right and see:
no one recognizes me.
I have lost all means of escape;
no one wants to help me.

⁶I cry to you, O Lord;
I say, "You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living."

⁷Listen to my groaning,
for I am in deep despair.
Rescue me from my pursuers,
for they are too strong for me.

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)**Repetition of preceding psalm.**

¹O Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; answer me, you who are righteous and faithful.

²Do not bring your servant to judgment, for no mortal is just in your sight.

³The enemy has pursued me, crushing my life to the ground, sending me to darkness with those long dead.

⁴And so my spirit fails me, my heart is full of fear.

⁵I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on what you have done and consider the work of your hand.

⁶I stretch out my hands to you, and thirst for you like a parched land.

⁷O Lord, answer me quickly: my spirit is faint with yearning. Do not hide

your face from me; save me from going down to the pit.

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 Lord, for to you I flee for refuge.

¹⁰Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your Spirit lead me on a safe path.

¹¹Preserve me, O Lord, for your name's sake; free me from distress, in your justice.

¹²You who are merciful, crush my enemies and destroy all my foes, for I am your servant.

PSALM 144 (143)

Happy the people whose God is the Lord! The first part of this psalm repeats verses of other psalms, especially Psalm 18. The second part, with simple images, reflects a yearning for heaven, where there will be no more tears or grief.

¹Blessed be the Lord, 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 Lord, 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 Lord, 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 the Lord!

PSALM 145 (144)

Bless the Lord forever. This psalm is like a litany: God is justice, faithfulness, goodness, the author of wonders. It invites us to discover the immense riches of God in his work and his revelation in the person of Christ.

I will extol you, my God and King; I will bless your name forever.

²I will praise you day after day and exalt your name forever.

³Great is the Lord, most worthy of praise; and his deeds are beyond measure.

⁴Parents commend your works to their children and tell them your feats.

⁵They proclaim the splendor of your majesty and recall your wondrous works.

⁶People will proclaim your mighty deeds, and I will declare your greatness.

⁷They will celebrate your abundant kindness, and rejoice in singing of your justice.

⁸Compassionate and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in love.

⁹The Lord is good to everyone; his mercy embraces all his creation.

¹⁰All your works will give you thanks; all your saints, O Lord, will praise you.

¹¹They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your power,

¹²that all may know of your mighty deeds, your reign and its glorious splendor.

¹³Your reign is from age to age; your dominion endures from generation to generation.

The Lord is true to his promises and lets his mercy show in all he does.

¹⁴The Lord lifts up those who are falling and raises those who are beaten down.

¹⁵All creatures look to you to be fed in due season; ¹⁶with open hand you satisfy the living according to their needs.

¹⁷Righteous is the Lord in all his ways, his mercy shows in all his deeds.

¹⁸He is near those who call on him, who call trustfully upon his name.

¹⁹He fulfills the wish of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

²⁰For those who love him, the Lord has compassion; but the wicked, he will destroy.

²¹Let my mouth speak in praise of the Lord, let every creature bless his holy name, for ever and ever.

PSALM 146 (145)

The Lord frees the oppressed. The extent of human anguish – the hungry, the prisoners, the oppressed – has reached such a point that the powerful of this earth alone are incapable of finding a solution for it. Only God can give the world justice, peace, and hope. *He has sent me to give Good News to the poor, to announce freedom to prisoners...*

Let us not be drawn away by pastimes which devour time, but let us look at reality. The world is full of evil and injustice and God asks us to do what he does: to “straighten what is crooked.”

Let us proclaim without fear that 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.

¹ Alleluia!

Praise the Lord, my soul!

²I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to God while I live.

³Do not put your trust in princes, in a great one who cannot save.

⁴Not sooner his spirit has left, that he goes back to the earth; on that very day, any plan comes to nothing.

⁵Blessed are they whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God,
⁶maker of heaven and earth,
the sea and all they contain.

The Lord is forever faithful;
⁷he gives justice to the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets the prisoners free.

⁸The Lord gives sight to the blind,
the Lord straightens the bent.
⁹The Lord protects the stranger,
sustains the widow and the orphan.

^{8c}The Lord loves the virtuous,
but he brings to ruin the way of the wicked.

¹⁰The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion,
from generation to generation. Alleluia!

PSALM 147 (146-147)

For the Jews, Jerusalem was more than a capital: it was the Holy City where God dwelt in his Temple. His presence protected the city and the people against hostile forces: Jerusalem is really the Church. 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 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.

Rejoice, Jerusalem! Let the Church rejoice because the Lord has “strengthened the bars of her gates.” The powers of evil and death will not overcome her. The Lord blessed her children and gave them his peace, not that of the world. He feeds his Church with his word and the best of wheat: his body-made-bread of life.

¹ *Alleluia!*

How good it is to sing to our God,
how sweet and befitting to praise him!

² The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem;
he gathers the exiles of Israel;
³ he heals their broken hearts
and binds up their wounds.

⁴ He determines the number of stars,
he calls each of them by name.

⁵ The Lord is great and mighty in power;
his wisdom is beyond measure.

⁶ The Lord lifts up the humble,
but casts the wicked to the ground.

⁷ Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving,
make music on the harp for our God.

⁸ With clouds he covers the sky,
and provides the earth with rain;
he covers the hills with grass,
and with plants for man to cultivate.

⁹ He provides food for the cattle,
even for the young ravens when they call.

¹⁰ He is not concerned with the strength of a horse;
nor is he pleased in the speed of a runner;

¹¹The Lord delights in those who fear him
and expect him to care for them.

¹²Exalt the Lord, O Jerusalem;
praise your God, O Zion!

¹³For he strengthens the bars of your gates
and blesses your children within you.

¹⁴He grants peace on your borders
and feeds you with the finest grain.

¹⁵He sends his command to the earth
and swiftly runs his word.

¹⁶He spreads snow like wool;
he scatters frost like ashes.

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.

¹⁹It is he who tells Jacob his words,
his laws and decrees to Israel.

²⁰This he has not done for other nations,
so his laws remain unknown to them.
Alleluia!

PSALM 148 (147)**Alleluia!**

¹*Alleluia!* Praise the Lord from the
heavens; praise him in the heavenly
heights.

²Praise him, all his angels; praise
him, all his heavenly hosts.

³Praise him, sun and moon; praise
him, all you shining stars.

⁴Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.

⁵Let them praise the name of the
Lord, at whose command they were
made.

⁶He established them forever and
gave each a fixed and lasting duty.

⁷Praise the Lord 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,

¹⁰you wild beasts and tame animals,
you creeping things and winged fowl.

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 the Lord.

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.*

• **148** Once more: Praise God! It would seem that
peoples more simple than ourselves have never
finished praising God. Would something be wanting

when we are assured of everything and our eyes
constantly enjoy the marvels we have fabricated?

PSALM 149 (150)

National hymn. The people of God know that they are called to glory and happiness. They will be the instruments of God's justice. God uses his poor, gathered by Christ, to judge the world and bring it to salvation.

¹ *Alleluia!*
Sing to the Lord a new song,
sing his praise in the assembly of his
saints.

² Let Israel rejoice in his Maker,
let the people of Zion glory in their
King!

³ Let them dance in praise of his
name
and make music for him with harp
and timbrel.

⁴ For the Lord delights in his people;
he crowns the lowly with victory.

⁵ The saints will exult in triumph;
even at night on their couches.
⁶ Let the praise of God be on their
lips,
and in their hands two-edged swords,
⁷ to wreak vengeance on the nations
and punishment on the peoples,
⁸ to bind their kings in chains
and their nobles in iron fetters,
⁹ to execute on them the written sen-
tence:
this is the glory of all his saints. Alle-
luia!

PSALM 150 (149)

The book of psalms ends with a song performed by the whole orchestra which is symbolic: to be complete, the praise of God requires the participation of all nations, of all races, of all civilizations, and of all cultures. "All who have breath, praise the Lord." Revelation will repeat it (5:13), "To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb, be praise, honor and glory and power for ever and ever."

Universal symphony!

¹ *Alleluia!*
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in the vault of heaven.
² Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him for his own greatness.
³ Praise him with trumpet blast;
praise him with lyre and harp.
⁴ Praise him with dance and tambourines;
praise him with pipe and strings.
⁵ Praise him with clashing cymbals;
praise him with clanging cymbals.
⁶ Let everything that breathes sing praise to the
Lord.
Alleluia!