

RESPONDING TO THE PSALMS – FEBRUARY 2024

- a project of the Spirituality Committee of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

"The collection of psalms found in Scripture, composed as it was under divine inspiration, has, from the very beginnings of the Church, shown a wonderful power of fostering devotion among Christians as they offer to God a continuous sacrifice of praise, the harvest of lips blessing his name. Following a custom already established in the Old Law, the psalms have played a conspicuous part in the sacred liturgy itself, and in the divine office. Thus was born what Basil calls *the voice of the Church*, that singing of psalms, which is the daughter of that hymn of praise (to use the words of our predecessor, Urban VIII) which goes up unceasingly before the throne of God and of the Lamb, and which teaches those especially charged with the duty of divine worship, as Athanasius says, *the way to praise God, and the fitting words in which to bless him*. Augustine expresses this well when he says: *God praised himself so that man might give him fitting praise; because God chose to praise himself man found the way in which to bless God.*"
from the Apostolic Constitution *Divino afflatu* of Pope Saint Pius X 1911

We offer the Sunday Responsorial Psalm as a focus for prayer and reflection during the week ahead for yourself or share with others. You could note your own thoughts as a possible personal journal.

Acknowledgements: Excerpts from The Psalms: A New Translation © 1963 The Grail (England) published by HarperCollins.

Sunday 14 February 2024

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 146(147):1-6

PRAISE THE LORD WHO HEALS THE BROKEN-HEARTED.

Praise the Lord for he is good;
sing to our God for he is loving:
to him our praise is due.

*Think of how God is good and loving towards us as individuals, as the Church, as the human race
Reflect how you can make your prayer, words and our actions, your whole life, real praise of God*

The Lord builds up Jerusalem
and brings back Israel's exiles,
he heals the broken-hearted,
he binds up all their wounds.
He fixes the number of the stars;
he calls each one by its name.

*Pray for the broken hearted, those you know by name and others – how can you bring them God's comfort?
Reflect that our God is so close to us and yet we know him as the divine creator of the stars and the universe*

Our Lord is great and almighty;
his wisdom can never be measured.
The Lord raises the lowly;
he humbles the wicked to the dust.

*Pray for God's wisdom to inspire you in your decisions, great and small
Pray for the marginalised and downtrodden, and ask to find ways to support them respectfully*

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 31(32):1-2,5,11

YOU ARE MY REFUGE, O LORD; YOU FILL ME WITH THE JOY OF SALVATION.

Happy the man whose offence is forgiven,
whose sin is remitted.

O happy the man to whom the Lord
imputes no guilt,
in whose spirit is no guile.

*Give thanks that we are blessed [happy] for we know God can forgive our sins by his grace
Try to realise how amazing it is that God can take away the guilt of our sin*

But now I have acknowledged my sins;
my guilt I did not hide.
I said: 'I will confess
my offence to the Lord.'
And you, Lord, have forgiven
the guilt of my sin.

*Take time to acknowledge your failings towards God and others – a chance to prepare well for Confession
Thank God for the peace of mind and soul that comes with his forgiveness*

Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord,
exult, you just!
O come, ring out your joy,
all you upright of heart.

*Simply rejoice in the Lord for the goodness of people generally in contrast to the bad news that can dominate.
Thank God for the good people in your life and how they sustain your faith*

Wednesday 14 February 2024 Ash Wednesday

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 50(51):3-6,12-14,17

HAVE MERCY ON US, O LORD, FOR WE HAVE SINNED.

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.

As Lent begins make time to just ask God to forgive you

How do you understand God as merciful, kind and compassionate? How does that shape your relationships?

My offences truly I know them;
my sin is always before me
Against you, you alone, have I sinned;
what is evil in your sight I have done.

*Take time to be honest with yourself about your sins and failings, where you go wrong in faith and life
Consider your sins in contrast to God who is all good, all holy*

A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.

Pray for purity of mind, body and soul

Ask to be filled with God's holy spirit

Give me again the joy of your help;
with a spirit of fervour sustain me,
O Lord, open my lips
and my mouth shall declare your praise.

*Concentrate your prayer on how you need the joy that comes from God's help and the fervour to be faithful
Simply praise God in whatever way you can for his gift of forgiveness and holiness*

Sunday 18 February 2024

First Sunday of Lent

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 24(25):4-6,7b-9

YOUR WAYS, LORD, ARE FAITHFULNESS AND LOVE FOR THOSE WHO KEEP YOUR COVENANT.

Lord, make me know your ways.

Lord, teach me your paths.

Make me walk in your truth, and teach me:

for you are God my saviour.

*Pray for the particular wisdom we need from God which will show us what direction he wants us to take in life
In this Lenten time reflect on what it means to walk in God's truth in daily life.*

Remember your mercy, Lord,

and the love you have shown from of old.

In your love remember me,

because of your goodness, O Lord.

Think of those particular moments when God has shown you his love and mercy

Thank God for his love and goodness to you, acknowledging your need of him as a sinner

The Lord is good and upright.

He shows the path to those who stray,

He guides the humble in the right path,

He teaches his way to the poor.

Pray for people who have strayed from faith that God will show them the right path. How might you help them?

Thank God for the humble and self-effacing people whom you know and their example of faith

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 115(116):10,15-19

I WILL WALK IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING.

I trusted, even when I said:
'I am sorely afflicted,'
O precious in the eyes of the Lord
is the death of his faithful.

*Let Lent give you time to think with gratitude of the times you needed to trust God in difficult situations
Pray for those who are facing persecution, even death, for their Christian faith, for defending the truth*

Your servant, Lord, your servant am I;
you have loosened my bonds.
A thanksgiving sacrifice I make;
I will call on the Lord's name.

*Reflect how we can be set free from the bonds of sin so as to serve God and others freely in his holy Church
Give thanks to God by making some sacrifice of time to pray and call on his name*

My vows to the Lord I will fulfil
before all his people,
in the courts of the house of the Lord,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

*Lent asks us to recall the vows of our baptism. Take time to do that. Sign yourself with holy water
Thank God for the people who share prayer and liturgy with you, for the support that gives you*