

## LONGING FOR GOD

One of the loveliest and best-known of these poems is the song of confidence that is Psalm 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd", with its profound sense that there is nothing at all that can go wrong, even in the "Valley of the Shadow of Death". Then there are two absolutely beautiful hymns, 103 and 104; sit with them and with the refrain with which they begin and end, "Bless the Lord, my soul". For a completely different kind of prayer, you might read through Psalm 88. This is what is often called a "lament", since it concentrates on the awfulness of life, the poet on the verge of death, without any hope at all. It ends, at least in some translations, "my only friend is darkness". Then you might ponder on the desire for revenge expressed at 137:8-9, and reflect on why it is never read in church. Or you might think about the complaint against God in Psalm 13 ("How long, O Lord, how long?"). Then there is Psalm 22, in which Christians found a ready-made way of thinking about the appalling death of Jesus. And, on that subject, look at 110 and 118, which offered the early Church language to express Jesus' identity: "blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord". Then you might read through psalms like 93, 97 and 99, which unmistakably assert the kingship of God; as you do so, reflect what a dangerous move such an assertion might be in such an uneasy world. Alternatively you might sit with Psalm 63, which gives powerful expression to the human longing for God, and see whether you can echo it. Best of all, perhaps, just read very slowly through all 150 psalms, to decide which is your favourite. Then ask yourself: why did they choose to begin with Psalm 1? And what was it about Psalm 150 that made them put it as the climax of this extraordinary hymn book?



### Mass text

#### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**O God, come to my assistance;  
O Lord, make haste to help me!  
You are my rescuer, my help;  
O Lord, do not delay.**

FIRST READING Isaiah 55:1-3

PSALM Psalm 144

RESPONSE **You open wide your hand, O Lord,  
you grant our desires.**

1. The Lord is kind and full of compassion, slow to anger, abounding in love. How good is the Lord to all, compassionate to all his creatures. **R.**
2. The eyes of all creatures look to you and you give them their food in due time. You open wide your hand, grant the desires of all who live. **R.**
3. The Lord is just in all his ways and loving in all his deeds. He is close to all who call him, call on him from their hearts. **R.**

SECOND READING Romans 8:35. 37-39

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!  
Man does not live on bread alone,  
but on every word that comes from the mouth  
of God.  
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL Matthew 14:13-21

#### COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**I am the bread of life, says the Lord;  
whoever comes to me will not hunger  
and whoever believes in me will not thirst.**

#### Next Sunday's Readings:

1 Kings 19:9. 11-13  
Romans 9:1-5  
Matthew 14:22-33

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# SUNDAY BULLETIN

## HOW TO READ THE PSALMS



Over the next few weeks, I shall be trying to persuade you to read the Bible; so I advise you to buy a copy, or blow the dust off your existing one.

People nowadays seem very nervous about reading the Old Testament. Sometimes they say, "It's all about creating the world in six days", which just means that they have not been able to go beyond the first page of the Bible. Sometimes the verdict is "The God of the Old Testament is a very bad-tempered god", which means that they have just singled out a few rather alarming passages (and it cannot be denied that there are plenty of these). Then yet another reaction is "I simply can't understand it", a point of view with which I have some sympathy.

If you find the Old Testament difficult for one of these reasons, my suggestion is that you start by opening the psalms, right in the centre of your Bible. The reason for this is that in this extraordinary collection of poetry, probably originally songs sung in the worship in the Temple (or, more locally, in the synagogue; or even sung privately at home, as on the sabbath), you find Israel letting its hair down, and praying with absolute honesty (which, if you think about it, is the only appropriate way to pray).

There are 150 of these psalms (151 in the Greek translation), and they come in many shapes and sizes. I am going to suggest a few of these different types of song; and I invite you to open your Bibles and read prayerfully through them, to try to get in touch with the emotions that drive them. (One thing you need to be aware of is that from Psalm 9 to Psalm 147, the Greek numbers are one lower than the Hebrew, which I am following. So if you cannot find a particular psalm in your Bible, look at the number above it.)

## How to read the Bible



Today we begin a new series for *Sunday Bulletin*, specially written for this Year of the Word, in which Fr Nicholas King SJ explores ways in which we can look at the scriptures.

2 AUGUST 2020

18TH SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR A

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK II