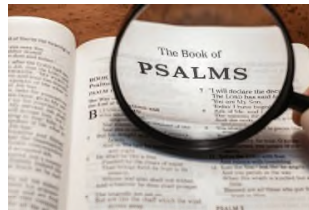


The Psalms - Part 2



The Book of Psalms is a collection of 150 prayers from different periods of Israel's life. While the final collection is connected in a special way with the figure of King David, Moses and Solomon are credited with writing a few, too.

Two important features of the Psalms deserve special notice. First, the majority were composed, originally, precisely for liturgical worship. This is shown by the frequent indication of liturgical leaders interacting with the community (e.g., Ps 118:1-4). Secondly, they follow certain distinct patterns or literary forms. Thus, we have hymns/poems of praise, lamentations, thanksgiving, and wisdom.

It is obvious that not all of the Psalms can be pigeon-holed into neat classifications, but even a brief sketch of these types helps us to catch the structure and spirit of the Psalms we read. It has been rightly said that the Psalms are "a school of prayer." They not only provide us with models to follow but inspire us to voice our own deepest feelings and aspirations.

The prayer of the Psalms takes our human life, in all its dimensions, very seriously. They are full of "heart" and full of feeling. Nothing in our experience is foreign to our prayer. It is there in the everyday interactions of our lives, in our deeply felt blessings and joys, and our deeply suffered pains and hurts that we respond to our God, the source and root of all life. The Psalms are truly prayers from the heart, from the heart of our lives.

At Mass each week, we have the opportunity to sing the Psalm led by the Cantor. With the singing of the Responsorial Psalm at Mass, the rhythm of the liturgy changes and the assembly is called to an even more active role. The singing of the Responsorial Psalm refrain takes us more deeply into the words. Singing also unites us as one group. Together we follow the melody and together we breathe. Together we give voice to the theological theme expressed in the Psalm refrain that highlights either the first reading or the Gospel. So, the next time at weekend Mass, make it part of your prayer, and sing along with others at the time of the Responsorial Psalm.

Have a blessed, peaceful, and prayerful week ahead!