



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square
Wednesday, 19 June 2024

[Multimedia]

The following text includes parts that were not read out loud, but should be considered as such.

Cycle of Catechesis. The Spirit and the Bride. The Holy Spirit guides the people of God towards Jesus our hope. 4. *The Spirit teaches the Bride to pray. The Psalms, symphony of prayer in the Bible*

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

In preparation for the next Jubilee, I invited the [faithful] to devote 2024 “to a great ‘symphony’ of prayer”. [\[1\]](#) With today’s catechesis, I would like to recall that the Church already possesses a symphony of prayer, whose composer is the Holy Spirit, and it is the Book of Psalms.

Like all symphonies, it has various “movements”, that is, various genres of prayer: praise, thanksgiving, supplication, lamentation, narration, sapiential reflection, and others, both in the personal form and in the choral form of the whole people. These are songs that the Spirit himself placed on the lips of the Bride, his Church. As I mentioned last time, all the Books of the Bible are inspired by the Holy Spirit, but the Book of Psalms is also so in the sense that it is full of poetic inspiration.

The Psalms have had a special place in the New Testament. Indeed, there were and still are editions that combine the New Testament and the Psalms together. On my desk, I have a Ukrainian copy of the New Testament with the Psalms that was sent to me. It belonged to a soldier who died in the war. He prayed with this book at the front. Not all Psalms — and not every part of every Psalm — can be repeated and assimilated by Christians, and even less by modern man. At times, they reflect a historical context and a religious mentality that are no longer ours. This does not mean that they were not inspired, but in some ways, they are linked to a [particular] time and a temporary stage of revelation, as is also the case with a large part of ancient legislation.

What makes the Psalms worthy of our attention is that they were the prayer of Jesus, of Mary, of the Apostles and of all the Christian generations that came before us. When we recite them, God listens to them with that grandiose “orchestration” that is the communion of Saints. According to the Letter to the Hebrews, Jesus, enters the world with a verse from a Psalm in his heart: “Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God” (cf. *Heb* 10:7; *Ps* 40:9). And according to the Gospel of Luke, he leaves the world with another verse on his lips: “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit” (*Lk* 23:46; cf. *Ps* 31:6).

The use of Psalms in the New Testament is followed by that of the Fathers and the entire Church, which makes them a fixed element in the celebration of Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. “All the Sacred Scripture breathes the goodness of God”, says Saint Ambrose, “but in particular the sweet book of the Psalms” [2] — the sweet book of the Psalms. I wonder, do you pray with the Psalms from time to time? Do you pick up the Bible and pray a Psalm? When you are a bit sad for having sinned, for example, do you pray Psalm 50? There are many Psalms that help us keep going. Form the habit of praying with the Psalms. I assure you that you will be happy in the end.

But we cannot only live on the legacy of the past: it is necessary to make the Psalms *our* prayer. It was written that, in a certain sense, we must ourselves become the “scribes” of the Psalms, making them ours and praying with them. [3] If there are Psalms, or just verses, that speak to our heart, it is good to repeat them and pray them throughout the day. Psalms are prayers “for all seasons”: there is no state of mind or need that does not find in them the best words to be transformed into prayer. Unlike other prayers, Psalms do not lose their effectiveness by being repeated; on the contrary, they increase it. Why? Because they are inspired by God and “breathe” God, every time they are read with faith.

If we feel oppressed by remorse or guilt, because we are sinners, we can repeat with David: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love” (*Ps* 51:1). If we want to express a strong personal bond with love, let us say: “O God, thou art my God / I seek thee, / my soul thirsts for thee; / my flesh faints for thee, / as in a dry and weary land where no water is” (*Ps* 63:1). It is not for nothing that the Liturgy has inserted this Psalm in the Lauds of Sunday and the solemnities. And if fear and anguish assail us, those wonderful words of Psalm 23 come to our rescue: “The Lord is my shepherd ... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, / I fear no

evil” (*Ps* 23:4).

Psalms allow us not to impoverish our prayer by reducing it merely to requests, to a continuous “give me, give us...”. Let us learn from the Lord’s Prayer, which, before asking for our “daily bread”, says, “Hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come, thy will be done”. The Psalms help us to open ourselves to a prayer that is less focused on ourselves: a prayer of praise, of blessing, of thanksgiving; and they also help us give voice to all creation, involving it in our praise.

Brothers and sisters, may the Holy Spirit, who gave the Church Bride the words to pray to her divine Bridegroom, help us to make them resound in the Church today, and to make this year of preparation for the Jubilee a true symphony of prayer. Thank you!

[1] *Letter to Archbishop Fisichella for the Jubilee 2025* (11 February 2022).

[2] Cf *Comment on the Psalms* I, 4, 7: CSEL 64,4-7.

[3] Giovanni Cassiano, *Conlationes*, X,11: SCh 54, 92-93.

APPEAL

Tomorrow will be World Refugee Day, promoted by the United Nations. May it be an occasion to turn an attentive and fraternal gaze to all those who are compelled to flee their homes in search of peace and security. We are all required to welcome, promote, accompany and integrate those who knock on our doors. I pray that States will strive to ensure humane conditions for refugees and to facilitate integration processes.

Special Greetings

I extend a cordial welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially the groups from Australia, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Viet Nam. I invoke upon you and your families the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Lastly, my thoughts turn to *the sick* , to *the elderly* , to *newlyweds* and, in particular, to *young people* . The day after tomorrow, we will celebrate the liturgical memory of Saint Luigi Gonzaga, who loved life and for this reason, devoted it entirely to the great ideals of Christianity. May he help you rediscover the vocation to holiness in generously giving oneself to God and to our brothers and sisters.

Brothers and sisters, let us continue to pray for peace. War is always a defeat, from the time it starts. Let us pray for peace in martyred Ukraine, in the Holy Land, in Sudan, in Myanmar and everywhere where people are suffering from war. Let us pray for peace every day.

And I offer my blessing to all of you!

Summary of the Holy Father's words

Today we continue our catechesis on the Holy Spirit, who teaches the Church, as the Bride of Christ, how to pray. For our symphony of prayer in preparation for the upcoming Jubilee, we turn to the poetry of the Psalms, just as that great “orchestra”, the communion of saints, has done since the Church’s earliest days. The Psalms express every movement of this symphony and echo every sentiment of our hearts in words that often convey wonder, grief, and hope. The more frequently we repeat these inspired prayers, the stronger and more effective they become. May the Holy Spirit enrich our prayer with this gift, and in so doing, empower us to give voice to all creation, involving it in our praise.