

‘For you my soul is thirsting, O Lord, my God’

Ps 62:2

Very often, perhaps, the psalm at Mass gets overlooked. Squeezed between the First and the Second Readings, we are usually focused so intently on getting the response right that the words of the verses almost pass us by, and very few sermons are preached on the words of the psalm, with attention being given more to the other readings and especially to the Gospel of course. But all of this is a shame because the psalms are strikingly beautiful and filled with the wisdom of God. Between them, the one hundred and fifty psalms cover almost every human emotion and need: whatever your thought or mood, whatever your joy or trouble, you are sure to find in the psalms at least some lines which will match your current circumstance. Between them, they even cover all the hours of the day, with meditations on the hope of dawn, the labours of the noonday, the calm collectedness of the evening, and the darkness of the night. They reveal God’s power and might alongside His tenderness and mercy; they unfold for us the beauty of His creation and the glory of His heaven; they make known to us our fallen nature as well as God’s work of forgiveness and of raising us up once more.

In truth, the psalms are indeed the prayerbook of the heart.

No wonder that the Divine Office, the daily prayer book of priests, and monks, and nuns, throughout the Church is made up chiefly of the psalms. No wonder the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a sort of shortened version of the Divine Office for lay people, is so popular. In the Divine Office and the Little Office the Church has wisely ordered the psalms according to the seasons and the feast days of the year, and to the time of day and the day of the week. The psalm we have just heard is set as one of the psalms for Lauds, or Morning Prayer, on every Sunday of the year and on all the major feast days too: as

the soul wakes from the long darkness of the night, she immediately turns and looks for the God whom she has not seen for so many hours, and cries out in longing, ‘For you my soul is thirsting, O Lord, my God.’ Without God in my soul, even my flesh pines away ‘like a dry weary land without water,’ and so I ‘come before you in the sanctuary, to behold your strength and your glory’ so that my soul may cling ‘fast to you’ and your right hand may uphold me.

In your own time at home, re-read this psalm as if it were Christ Himself speaking these words to His Father in heaven as He rises from the dead on that first Easter Sunday morning, and you will find yourself singing an altogether different song from what you thought you were singing!

Consider this psalm also as if it were a hymn that we might sing during Holy Communion. A hymn of longing for God’s presence; a hymn that sings of your soul’s yearning for the living God; a hymn that speaks of your trust and confidence in Him; a hymn that raises its voice in praise of the God who fills your soul ‘as with a banquet.’

In the run-up to our Eucharistic Congress – as we approach this God-given time of contemplation and meditation on Our Lord’s presence in the Blessed Sacrament – I want to do something slightly different with you this morning. I want to turn your attention to the tabernacle, there above our high altar, where Our Lord Himself lies reposing in the quiet heart of our church, and gaze on Him. And as you wonder at the presence of our God in His sanctuary, and focus on the Blessed Sacrament, I want you to listen again to the words of today’s psalm.

Please! Turn your head and look at the tabernacle, and keep your eyes fixed on that gold curtain – not on your missal or iPhone – and think about Our Lord’s living presence there in the Blessed Sacrament. And as you listen to these words, make them your own prayer to Our Lord in your heart and *feel* yourself longing for Him:

O God, you are my God; at dawn I seek you;
for you my soul is thirsting.
For you my flesh is pining,
like a dry, weary land without water.

I have come before you in the sanctuary,
to behold your strength and your glory.
Your loving mercy is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise.

I will bless you all my life;
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet;
with joyful lips, my mouth shall praise you.

For you have been my strength;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
My soul clings fast to you;
your right hand upholds me.