

Second Sunday of Easter, Year C

The Responsorial Psalm of today's Mass is a liturgical hymn of thanksgiving to God for the protection that he has given to one who was oppressed and who cried out to God in his distress. The community is celebrating the fact that God heard his cry and freed him from his afflictions. In the New Testament it is applied to Jesus who placed his trust in God during his passion. It celebrates the glory of the Resurrection. Let us first reproduce the whole psalm, placing Jesus in the role of the one whom God has liberated (though, of course, not every sentiment can be applied properly to him).

Psalm 118 (The Easter psalm par excellence)

MC (Master of Ceremonies)

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!
Let Israel say, 'His steadfast love endures forever.'

(the congregation repeats: 'His steadfast love endures forever')

Let the house of Aaron say, 'His steadfast love endures forever.'

(the priests repeat 'His steadfast love endures forever')

Let those who fear the Lord say, 'His steadfast love endures forever.'

(The priests and congregation repeat 'His steadfast love endures forever').

JESUS *(The person who is thanking God for being saved)*

Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.
With the Lord on my side I do not fear. What can mortals do to me?
The Lord is on my side to help me; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

CHORUS *(Responding to the witness given by the one saved)*

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in mortals.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in princes'.

JESUS

nations surrounded me; in the name of the Lord I cut them off! They surrounded me,
surrounded me on every side;
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!

They surrounded me like bees; they blazed like a fire of thorns;
the name of the Lord I cut them off!

I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and my
might; he has become my salvation.

All

in

CHORUS

There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous: 'The right hand of the Lord does
valiantly; the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.'

JESUS

I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord.
The Lord has punished me severely, but he did not give me over to death¹.

JESUS (*knocking with his cross at the door of heaven*)

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.

MC

This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it'.

JESUS

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

MC

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone
This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.
This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it².

CHORUS

'Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!' 'Blessed is the one
who comes. In the name of the Lord, we bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God,
and he has given us light'.

MC

the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar'.

'Bind

JESUS

'You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you'.

MC

'O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever'.³

The risen Christ is present among us this morning reminding us of God's fidelity to him, and sharing his Spirit with us so that we, like him, will cry out to God in our distress. He promises us that God will hear us just as he heard him.

Furthermore, he wants us to know that there are many people in our world who are in distress. The Lord is at their side but there is often no one to tell them. They do not know to 'call on the Lord'(Psalm 118:5). There are many who are 'pushed hard' and who fall because they do not know to lean on the One who is supporting them (Psalm 118:13).

Jesus' first disciples could not stop themselves reaching out to others to tell them of all that they had seen and heard. In the readings from the Acts of the Apostles throughout this Easter season we read about the extraordinary growth of the Church as men and women came to know of

Jesus and of his resurrection. In communion with Jesus they were freed from the fear of death – free to live and to live to the full amid the ups and downs of daily life.

If we truly believe that Jesus is risen, we, like his early followers, will want to share our faith with others, so that they will be able to pray today's psalm from their heart, thanking God for giving them a share in a life that cannot be eroded by suffering or death.

Today's Gospel tells us how to go about it. Like Thomas, we are to place our fingers in the wounds and our hand into the pierced side. It is our privilege to proclaim the message of today's psalm as fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus. We have a mission from Christ to tell others that God is indeed by their side. But there is more to it than telling. If we really believe what we say, we can be the ones to show others that God is their support by being God's instrument in supporting them. Like the Beloved Disciple we can stand by others in their suffering. Like Thomas we can touch their wounds with gentleness, compassion and love. In this way we can help them experience what Jesus himself experienced, and praise God here with us in the assembly, for his 'steadfast love which endures forever'(Psalm 118:1-4,29).

Notes

¹'We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him'(Romans 6:9).

'We are treated as dying, and see we are alive'(2Corinthians 6:9).]

²[quoted by Jesus in Mark 12:10 = Matthew 23:42 = Luke 20:17 'This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved'(Acts 4:11-12). 'For it stands in scripture 'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame'. [Isaiah 28:16]. To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner'(1Peter 2:6-7). 'You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God'(Ephesians 2:19-22)]

³['Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!' (Mark 11:9-10 = Matthew 21:9 = Luke 19:38);

'So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord-- the King of Israel!'(John 12:13);

'You will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."'(Matthew 23:39);

'Your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord"'(Luke 13:35).

'There was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands'(Apocalypse 7:9).]