

Year D Summer Reading Small Group Questions



We have three options for summer reading:

- C.S. Lewis's "Reflections on the Psalms"
- Eugene Peterson's "Answering God"
- Kathleen Harmon's "Becoming the Psalms"

Each book helps us enter into the Psalms as both history and a conversation with God, something to be lived and experienced as much as studied.

We recommend you begin reading the Psalms and/or Wisdom literature over the summer. Being familiar with some of the reading will help with the lectures. If you have the optional book "The Gift of the Psalms", you will want to start reading chapters 1-3.

Please answer the following questions and bring them with you to our First Class Kick-off. You will need to read the CCC references to the Psalms on the back of this page. Your instructor may wish to collect your answers, so bring them to class the first day you meet at your parish location.

At the First Class Kick-off discussion, begin by introducing yourselves to those at your table and what you are looking forward to this year.

1. Each of our authors discusses various themes in and purposes to the Psalms. Did any of these themes or purposes:
 - a) Prompt you to consider the Psalms in a new way, and if so, how?
 - b) Prompt you to think about salvation history in a new way, and if so, how?
2. After reading the CCC references on page 2, answer one of the following:
 - Our authors and the Catechism speak of the praise that is found within the Psalms.
 - a) Can you think of other places in Scripture there is praise of God?
 - b) What is something for which you want to praise God?

- OR -

 - Our authors and the Catechism discuss how the psalms are both past and present, both communal and personal.
 - a) Can you think of other places in Scripture that highlights this past/present or personal/communal aspect to life with God?
 - b) Do you see yourself as part of this tapestry of time and community, and if so, how?
3. The Psalm Response for Mass on Sunday, Sept 17th, 2017 is taken from Ps 103. Read Psalm 103:1-4, 9-12 answer the following:
 - a) What ideas about God and relationship with God are expressed in this Psalm? These may be found by looking at key theological words, repeated ideas, and/or overall intent.
 - b) What connections do you see among Psalm 103:1-4, 9-12 and the other readings for Mass on this same day (Sirach 27:30-28:7; Romans 14:7-9; Matthew 18:21-35)?
4. The Psalms cover all aspects of life and draw us into the big picture of God's story. We experience that big picture in our daily life. Has studying Scripture for the past 3 years changed how you understand your experience of life?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on the Psalms:

The Psalms, the prayer of the assembly

2585 From the time of David to the coming of the Messiah texts appearing in these sacred books show a deepening in prayer for oneself and in prayer for others.³⁷ Thus the psalms were gradually collected into the five books of the Psalter (or "Praises"), the masterwork of prayer in the Old Testament.

2586 The Psalms both nourished and expressed the prayer of the People of God gathered during the great feasts at Jerusalem and each Sabbath in the synagogues. Their prayer is inseparably personal and communal; it concerns both those who are praying and all men. The Psalms arose from the communities of the Holy Land and the Diaspora, but embrace all creation. Their prayer recalls the saving events of the past, yet extends into the future, even to the end of history; it commemorates the promises God has already kept, and awaits the Messiah who will fulfill them definitively. Prayed by Christ and fulfilled in him, the Psalms remain essential to the prayer of the Church.³⁸

2587 The Psalter is the book in which The Word of God becomes man's prayer. In other books of the Old Testament, "the words proclaim [God's] works and bring to light the mystery they contain."³⁹ The words of the Psalmist, sung for God, both express and acclaim the Lord's saving works; the same Spirit inspires both God's work and man's response. Christ will unite the two. In him, the psalms continue to teach us how to pray.

2588 The Psalter's many forms of prayer take shape both in the liturgy of the Temple and in the human heart. Whether hymns or prayers of lamentation or thanksgiving, whether individual or communal, whether royal chants, songs of pilgrimage or wisdom meditations, the Psalms are a mirror of God's marvelous deeds in the history of his people, as well as reflections of the human experiences of the Psalmist. Though a given psalm may reflect an event of the past, it still possesses such direct simplicity that it can be prayed in truth by men of all times and conditions.

2589 Certain constant characteristics appear throughout the Psalms: simplicity and spontaneity of prayer; the desire for God himself through and with all that is good in his creation; the distraught situation of the believer who, in his preferential love for the Lord, is exposed to a host of enemies and temptations, but who waits upon what the faithful God will do, in the certitude of his love and in submission to his will. The prayer of the psalms is always sustained by praise; that is why the title of this collection as handed down to us is so fitting: "The Praises." Collected for the assembly's worship, the Psalter both sounds the call to prayer and sings the response to that call: Hallelu-Yah! ("Alleluia"), "Praise the Lord!"

What is more pleasing than a psalm? David expresses it well: "Praise the Lord, for a psalm is good: let there be praise of our God with gladness and grace!" Yes, a psalm is a blessing on the lips of the people, praise of God, the assembly's homage, a general acclamation, a word that speaks for all, the voice of the Church, a confession of faith in song.⁴⁰

37 Ezra 9:6-15; Neh 1:4-11; Jon 2:3-10; Tob 3:11-16; Jdt 9:2-14.

38 Cf. GILH, nn. 100-109.

39 DV 2.

40 St. Ambrose, In psalmum 1 enarratio, 1,9:PL 14,924; LH, Saturday, wk 10, OR.