



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend has one of my favorite Psalms – Psalm 63. The Liturgy of the Hours (the official prayer of the Church, prayed by all clergy and religious) has this Psalm as part of Morning Prayer on Sunday in the first week of the four-week cycle, and for every Feast and Solemnity. The response at today's Mass is **"My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God"** (Ps. 63:2b). The first part of the Psalm (verse 2) says:

O God, you are my God whom I seek; for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water.

Do you hear it? It's all about thirst for God. There is such a longing, a pining for God evident in this Psalm. **"My flesh pines and my soul thirsts"**! And this longing is for God!

The world tells us that we should run after our desires. However, as "good Catholics," we see the trouble that our desires get us into, and we may be tempted to suppress our desires. The thing is, it is only *by* our desires that we get to Heaven. What do I mean? We need to increase, not decrease our desire, for desire is like the rocket fuel that will allow us to fly to Heaven, into the Heart of God!

The problem isn't with the desire itself. The problem is which way our "rocket" is facing. If we are facing in on ourselves – as the world tells us to – then when the "rocket fuel" of desire ignites, it will lead to destruction. But – and this is a big "but" – if our desires are pointed in the right direction (God), we can fly to the stars!

Every desire we have in this world is really a desire for God. Food, sleep, entertainment, sex, stability, security, love... every desire is really a desire for God. On the basic level, these desires point to the longing we have for God to fulfill us. On a deeper level, our desires are for God Himself. The problem is that we too often "short-circuit" our deepest desires – we point to earthly things to fill the deepest longing and emptiness within us. This emptiness is infinite and can only be filled by the infinite God. When we look to our spouse to be our fulfillment, for instance, we are being completely unfair to that person. He or she can NEVER be anyone's ultimate fulfillment, and we will be left empty.

This is where this weekend's Psalm comes in. It is showing us that our desires are really for God, and that we need to recognize this, and redirect our "short-circuited" desires back to God.

How do we do this? Prayer. Pope Benedict XVI said, **"Prayer, properly understood, is nothing other than becoming a longing for God."** Too often, we think prayer has to be something formal, or using certain words, or is about petitioning God. The reality is that prayer is meant to be a union with God. When we surrender ourselves over to our deepest desires, we allow ourselves to long for God. And this longing *is* prayer.

Do you long for God? Well... yes. But, do you know you long for God? As I have said countless times before, the summary of the Bible is **"God wants to marry us."** We need to fall in love with God. He, after all, is desperately in love with us.

I invite you this week to take this Psalm and let it become your prayer. **"O God, you are my God whom I seek; for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water."** Repeat it over and over. Pray with it. Let it become a part of you. Let it stir up that deep longing for God that is already within.