



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As I was looking through the readings this week, the Responsorial Psalm struck me.

Before I reflect on this weekend's Psalm, I want to explore a little more about the Psalms in general. Many times, we forget that the Psalm *is* Scripture, and so God inspired it. Maybe it is because we almost never hear preaching on the Psalms (I'm guilty of this), or because they are sung and not proclaimed, like the other readings. Whatever the reason, the Psalms really are part of Sacred Scripture and we are to approach them as

the word of God.

The Psalms are a collection of 150 different songs written by King David and other composers. They encompass the whole range of emotions – joy, praise, exaltation, sadness, despair, anger, hope, etc.. The Psalms may even shock at times, as they beg God for vengeance on their enemies. They are very real and very human, while still being the word of God. For centuries before Christ, they were the prayer book of the Israelite people. As such, Jesus would have been steeped in the Psalms growing up, and they both formed Him (even from the Cross He prayed Psalm 22), and prophesied about who He is.

Since they were the prayer book of Jesus, the Church has taken up the Psalms as our prayer book. In fact, all clergy and religious make a promise to pray the Psalms every day as part of the Liturgy of the Hours. As we pray through the Psalms, they can draw us closer to Jesus. We can ponder what was going on in Jesus' life on earth as He prayed each of the Psalms. We can also find comfort and consolation in our down times, knowing that millennia of saints and sinners – as well as Jesus Himself – experienced each of the emotions expressed in the Psalms.

This weekend we hear Psalm 145. The response is "**The Lord is near to all who call upon him**" (145:18). This Psalm speaks of the greatness of God, but, even with His incredible greatness, He is close to us. It reminds us that He "**is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness**" (145:8).

As I ponder this, I think about myself and how frail and broken I am. The natural tendency within me is to react to the greatness of God like Simon Peter: "**Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man**" (Luke 5:8). Yet, we are reminded today how merciful God is. He longs to be close to us. He will not step on our free will, though; He waits to be invited. When we **call upon him**, He is near to us. He can't help but draw near in His great love!

Why, then, do we often feel His absence, even when we call upon Him?! That's the great mystery! The greatest saints experienced this emptiness, this feeling of distance from God, or even the feeling of abandonment by God. St. Thérèse of Lisieux felt this distance from God for the last year and a half of her life. In a stunningly extreme example, St. Mother Teresa experienced this feeling of distance from God for the last fifty years of her life. Yes, FIFTY YEARS! Yet, in the midst of this incredible sense of abandonment, the saints trusted in God's loving presence. It doesn't mean they didn't struggle or doubt at times, but they persevered in their faith and trusted that God was indeed close, even when He seemed far away.

This is a great reminder to us that our feelings don't necessarily point to the reality of God's "proximity". As we struggle with asking, "Where is God now?" may we be reminded that, even if we can't feel Him, if we **call upon him** then **the Lord is near**.