

Psalms

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, ... the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Book of the Psalms using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to the Psalms and Wisdom Literature* will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don't miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church's criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God's unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church's living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit's guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you'll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§] And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||} and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.
14 Do all thi tioning,¹⁵ that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven ... earth ... under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God's g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

A Thing to Harpagmos (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable de the leading vi (1) Some, like “something sel

Prepare

Read the Introduction to the Psalms, paying particular attention to the *Structure* of the book, its *Themes and Characteristics*, and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of the Psalms to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of the Psalms, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on the Psalms as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Psalm 1

For understanding

1. **1:1–6.** What kind of psalm is this? What ways of life does it set forth? In what traditions is the “two ways” motif popular?
2. **Word Study: Blessed (1:1).** What does the Hebrew word *’ashrê* mean? Where in the OT is the term mainly found? Unlike the Hebrew *barak*, which is generally used for an invocation of blessing, as what does *’ashrê* function? What does it indicate about one’s worthiness? How is happiness thus understood? Who are those who are blessed or happy in this sense? Where does this type of declaration play a role in the NT?
3. **1:3.** Why do the righteous flourish? According to St. John of Damascus, how are we disposed to virtue and undisturbed meditation by Sacred Scripture?
4. **1:4.** What is chaff? Where did winnowing take place?

For application

1. **1:1.** What does it mean to “walk in the way” of someone’s counsel? Whose counsel have you followed most of your life? Toward what was that counsel intended to direct you? In hindsight, how has it benefitted or harmed you?
2. **1:2.** What is your understanding of the practice of Christian meditation? What is its purpose? How often do you practice it, either as a discipline or as part of prayer? The Psalmist meditates on the law of the Lord. On what do you typically meditate?
3. **1:3.** What should be the fruit of meditation? How should it affect all that you do?

Psalm 2

For understanding

1. **2:1–12.** When was this royal psalm recited? Theologically, on what is the psalm grounded? How does the NT read Ps 2?
2. **2:7.** By the declaration in the psalm, what kind of relationship does the newly crowned king enter? What does he thus become? Applied to Christ, toward what does the “today” of the psalm point?
3. **2:8.** By God’s design, what was the Davidic kingdom intended to be? What process was it to begin?

For application

1. **2:1–3.** Which religious bonds have modern nations conspired to burst? How serious is this defection? How has it influenced the culture in which you live?
2. **2:7–8.** Even if you are not royalty, how do you come into the divine adoption provided through Jesus? What do you ask of the Lord?

Psalm 3

For understanding

1. **3:2.** How is the same Hebrew term for “help” also translated? How often does the expression *selah* occur in the Psalms, and what does it mean? What do scholars speculate that it may have called for?
2. **3:4.** Before the construction of the Temple, what was stationed on Zion’s elevation in Jerusalem?

For application

1. **3:3.** The Psalmist calls God his “glory, and the lifter of my head”. As an expression of confidence, how might you apply this expression to yourself? For example, what does it mean for the Lord to lift your head?
2. **3:5–6.** What causes sleepless nights for you? How confident are you that the Lord sustains you? What can you do to foster increased confidence in him?

Psalm 4

For understanding

1. **4:3.** Who is the “godly” person? How often is the Hebrew term used in the Psalms for the faithful of Israel, and how often for God himself? God answers the prayers of the godly; what about the pleas of sinners?
2. **4:4.** What does the Psalmist admonish his enemies to do? Where does Paul quote the Greek LXX version of this passage? In that version, what is the opponent exhorted to do?

For application

1. **4:4.** As applied to your own conduct, how can you be angry without sinning? When you are tempted to reply to someone out of anger, what benefit comes with sleeping on the situation before acting?
2. **4:7.** Where does joy come from? As a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), what is the difference between joy and pleasure? How does joy provide contentment even in difficult situations?

Psalm 5

For understanding

1. **5:1–12.** What groups of people does this morning prayer contrast? As often in the psalms, what kind of sins are those of the Psalmist’s enemies? Who is the “choirmaster”?
2. **5:9.** What do the words of the wicked become? Why does Paul quote this passage in Rom 3:13? Of what is he aware?
3. **5:11.** To what does the name of God sometimes refer?

For application

1. **5:3.** When is the time of day you feel most inclined to pray? What does it mean to “watch” in prayer?
2. **5:4–6.** These verses list the types of people in whom God takes no pleasure. If you list their opposites, in what kind of person does God delight? Which of the two lists best describes you?

Psalm 6

For understanding

1. **6:5.** What is Sheol? What was it believed in OT times that the deceased in Sheol could no longer do?
2. **6:8.** What does the Psalmist wish from his “foes”? By what is the saying followed? When does Jesus borrow these words?

For application

1. **6:2.** Have you ever prayed for healing of any sort? What expectation did you have that the Lord would heal you? When Jesus healed the paralytic (Mt 9:2–6), what sickness did he address first?
2. **6:6.** Recall a time when you became most aware of your sinfulness in the face of God’s holiness. What happened to make you realize your state? What was your emotional reaction? How did it open your heart to God’s love for you despite your sinfulness?

Psalm 7

For understanding

1. **7:1–17.** For what is the one who is falsely accused appealing to the Lord? Where would such a prayer have been recited, and what would the accused do? How does the Psalmist conclude? What is a “Shiggaion”? What is known of “Cush the Benjaminite”?
2. **7:2.** How do the Psalms often depict the wicked man? How does Peter use the image of a lion?
3. **7:11.** What kind of judge is the Lord? What is his “indignation”?

For application

1. **7:3.** When does praying “if I have sinned” mean you have a genuine doubt about the moral quality of your conduct, and when does it cover a reluctance to admit the reality of your sin? Either way, how do you feel about the seriousness of any sin you commit?
2. **7:8.** Because the Lord is your judge, when would you prefer him to judge you: before or after death? What advantage do you have by inviting his judgment before death?

Psalm 8

For understanding

1. **8:4.** To what does the Hebrew *ben-’ādām* refer? How is the Greek LXX of Ps 8:4–6 quoted in Heb 2:6–8 in reference to Christ? Of what does Paul see Christ’s exaltation as a fulfillment? What is the point of these references?
2. **8:5.** What is “a little less” an expression of? How do the Greek LXX and the Book of Hebrews understand it? What does the Hebrew *’elōhîm* typically mean, but to what can it also refer? What does the Greek LXX understand it to mean in this context?

For application

1. **8:3–4.** What aspect of the physical creation most reminds you of the glory of God? How does it remind you of your place in creation and before the “mindfulness” of God?
2. **8:6.** Read the note for this verse. What is the difference between dominion and domination? How do modern concerns over ecology criticize domination by humans? How do you exercise dominion over the part of creation you can control?

Psalm 9

For understanding

1. **9:1—10:18.** How were these two psalms probably written? What are three indications of their original unity? What is an acrostic psalm?
2. **9:1.** What is a key component of a thanksgiving psalm? Where did this take place?
3. **9:4.** From where does the Lord rule and judge? What is the earthly counterpart of this heavenly seat?
4. **9:16.** How is the term *Higgaion* translated in 92:3?

For application

1. **9:2.** At a sporting event, how do spectators show their exultation when their team achieves a surprising victory? How might exultation at the Lord’s victory be shown during prayer?
2. **9:9.** The note for this verse describes a physical stronghold. How does God provide protection from danger the way a walled fortress does?

Psalm 10

For understanding

1. **10:1–18.** Like many lament psalms, how does this one begin and end? For what is the wicked man decried? What does he even deny about God? How does the Psalmist pray against him?
2. **10:4.** What do the words of the wicked that “there is no God” mean? What kind of person does Scripture consider such a one?

For application

1. **10:1.** In periods of spiritual desolation, what does God’s hiddenness feel like to you? How do you stay close to God when he seems to be far away?
2. **10:11.** In this verse, the victim of injustice thinks that God has “hidden his face”. What does that mean? When you fear that God has deliberately turned away from your problem, what does Jesus recommend that you do (Lk 18:1–8)?
3. **10:17.** To whose desire does the Lord pay attention? How does this kind of person approach the Lord in prayer?

Psalm 11

For understanding

1. **11:4.** To what is “his holy temple” a reference? How is the Lord’s throne in heaven represented in Israel’s earthly sanctuary?
2. **11:7.** When is God just? To what does the expression “behold his face” refer? What does the orientation of the psalm, which looks upward to the Lord, suggest that the Psalmist seeks? Where is the belief in full bloom that the faithful will see God in heaven? What does Catholic theology call this?

For application

1. **11:1–3.** How do you answer someone who tells you that prayer for God’s help when things go wrong is useless? If your answer is like that of the Psalmist, how does it manifest itself in the way you pray?
2. **11:5.** How does the Lord test the righteous and the wicked? What is the test designed to accomplish? How do the righteous pass the test?

Psalm 12

For understanding

1. **12:1.** What is the exaggeration in this verse intended to achieve? What are those who speak in this way tempted to do?
2. **12:2.** Which sins of speech are mentioned in the psalm? What is a double heart?
3. **12:6.** What does it mean that the Lord’s promises are pure? Unlike the dishonest speech of the wicked, what is the word of the Lord like?

For application

1. **12:1.** In our era of widespread iniquity and apostasy, the liturgy contains numerous prayers of a general nature against these evils. How does the liturgy color the way you pray about them? For what do you pray? How specific does your prayer get?
2. **12:2.** How often do you suspect that you might be praying with a double heart? When that happens, how do you correct yourself?

Psalm 13

For understanding

1. **13:1.** What does the fourfold repetition of “how long ...?” suggest about the Psalmist’s patience? What do his words indicate that he feels?
2. **13:3.** For what is the Psalmist appealing to God?

For application

1. **13:3.** Has sorrow or pain ever led you to desire the sleep of death, even if it means suicide? How do you maintain confidence in God at such times?
2. **13:6.** In times of distress, how might singing as you pray help bolster confidence? What songs would you find most helpful at such times?

Psalm 14

For understanding

1. **14:1.** What does the fool despise? What does he smugly deny? What does the Psalmist use exaggeration to emphasize? From a biblical point of view, where does disbelief in God lead? What confirms that the poet is using hyperbole?
2. **14:7.** From where do God’s blessings radiate? What does the expression “restores the fortunes” often envision? What does it seem to suggest about Ps 14, or at least its final verse?

For application

1. **14:1.** In Scripture, what does the heart do? How permanent are the decisions made there likely to be? What have you decided about God in your heart? How have you acted on that decision?
2. **14:2.** According to this verse, who is the one who acts wisely? In your experience, how does seeking after God before finding him change after finding him?

Psalm 15

For understanding

1. **15:1–5.** How does this entrance liturgy open, and how does it continue? What requirements are at issue? What must the righteous be like?
2. **15:5.** Why was collecting interest on assistance loans to the needy forbidden in Israel? Why were bribes forbidden by Moses?

For application

1. **15:2–3.** Notice what these verses say about patterns of speech. In what context should one speak the truth about others (Eph 4:15)? What does it mean to “take up a reproach” against someone? What harm is there in gossip?
2. **15:4.** What is a reprobate? Why does the Psalmist say such a person should be despised? How can a Christian love the sinner without getting involved in his sin?

Psalm 16

For understanding

1. **16:4.** To what did David, despite his moral failings, not succumb? What is a “libation of blood”? What was Israel forbidden to do in the name of foreign gods?
2. **16:10.** What are two names used in this psalm for the netherworld of the dead? What do the Greek LXX and St. Jerome’s translation of the Hebrew Psalter both understand the Hebrew *shahat* to mean? Either way, to what does the psalm point? Beginning with Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, how does Christian tradition read 16:8–11? How is it fulfilled in Jesus?

For application

1. **16:3.** Why would the “saints in the land” be the Psalmist’s delight? What ongoing associations do you have with fellow Catholics or even other Christians? What spiritual delight do you acquire from them?
2. **16:5.** How central to your life is your devotion to the Lord? How does he direct your destiny?
3. **16:7–8.** How does the Lord give you counsel, and from where do you derive instruction in spiritual things? How do you keep the Lord always before you?

Psalm 17

For understanding

1. **17:8.** What is the “apple” of the eye? How is the Lord pictured? If, as many suppose, the Psalmist uttered this prayer in the Temple, of what may he have been thinking?
2. **17:15.** At what time of day do several of the psalms anticipate that the Lord will answer prayers and grant favors of deliverance? How might the Psalmist behold God’s form? How did the OT regard looking on God?

For application

1. **17:3.** Since no one is perfect, would you be able to say that God would find no wickedness in you if he should examine you closely? Even so, what might you gain if you invited God to examine you?
2. **17:14a.** According to the author of 1 Jn 2:15–17, what “lusts” do those whose portion in life is of the world exhibit? Why are such people prone to becoming enemies of the righteous? Why does John advise you not to love the world?

Psalm 18

For understanding

1. **18:2.** Why is God called a rock? Of what is a horn the symbol? How is the same Hebrew term translated in 1 Sam 2:10?
2. **18:10.** How is a cherub depicted in Near Eastern artwork? With what may the symbolism be connected here, and what function did it serve?
3. **18:20.** To what does “my righteousness” refer, and what does it suggest? What does this *not* mean about David?
4. **18:43.** Under David, what did Israel become? What is implied about David’s rise to power?

For application

1. **18:3.** How can this verse become a helpful prayer in time of temptation?
2. **18:25–26.** Compare these sayings with Titus 1:15. What does it mean to say that to the crooked the Lord shows himself perverse?
3. **18:29.** From where does spiritual strength come (Phil 4:13)? Ancient foot soldiers had to be nimble enough to leap high walls in pursuit of enemies. What obstacles in your life has the Lord given you the strength to leap over?

Psalm 19

For understanding

1. **19:1–14.** In this wisdom psalm, what does the poet extol, take delight in, and appeal to God for? In terms of imagery, to what is the natural light of the sun analogous? In terms of epithets, when is the Creator called “God” and the divine lawgiver called “LORD”?
2. **19:4.** What is the voice of the day and the night? By quoting the Greek LXX of this verse in Rom 10:18, to what is Paul comparing the voice of creation? To what does the blinding light of the sun point? In the ancient Near East, of what was the sun the symbol? What, however, does Scripture warn about the lights in the sky?
3. **19:5.** To what does the Hebrew *huppah* refer? By speaking in phenomenological rather than scientific terms, what does the Psalmist describe? Why can he not be charged with error when he depicts the sun in motion and the earth as stationary?

For application

1. **19:7–9.** How does the law of the Lord promote wisdom and enlightenment? What truth do the ordinances of the Lord communicate to the heart?
2. **19:12–13.** What is your objective in performing an examination of conscience? How thorough are your examinations? Of what “hidden faults” have you become aware? What are some “presumptuous sins” that your examinations have revealed to you?

Psalm 20

For understanding

1. **20:1.** With what does the psalm begin and end? What is the divine name, and how was it probably pronounced? Why is it invoked?

For application

1. **20:4.** What is your heart’s desire that you want the Lord to grant? How often do you ask him for it? If it seems that the Lord is not granting that desire, how might he be shaping your desires to match his own?
2. **20:7.** When you succeed at something or attain a desired goal, what do you brag about? Where does the credit for your success ultimately lie?

Psalm 21

For understanding

1. **21:7.** What is the secret of the king’s success? What will his reliance on God enable him to do?
2. **21:8–12.** By whom is the king being addressed? What promise do their words of encouragement include?

For application

1. **21:3.** What are some “goodly blessings” with which the Lord has met you? How often do you remember to thank him for them?
2. **21:10.** Why do this and other psalms speak of destroying not only Israel’s enemies but also their offspring? When the enemies you face are not human but spiritual, what might their offspring become? For example, what sins result as the “offspring” of pride?

Psalm 22

For understanding

1. **22:1.** What sense does the possessive pronoun (“my”) convey? What is its basis? What sort of cry is “why have you forsaken me”, and what does it suggest?
2. **22:16.** Because the Hebrew of this verse is nonsensical, what does it suggest about the text? How do the RSV2CE and the Latin Vulgate translate it with the help of the Greek LXX?
3. **22:22.** Who are the Psalmist’s brethren? To whom may the word have special reference? Why are these words given to Jesus in Heb 2:12?
4. **Word Study: The Afflicted (22:26).** Who are the ‘*anawim*? For whom is the term used once in Scripture, and how is he described? More often, for whom is it used in the plural? Outwardly, who are the ‘*anawim*, and why do they look to the Lord? Inwardly, with what are they filled, and what do they seek? Because poverty has made them rich in faith and trust, what does God do? In the prophecies of Isaiah, what is the Messiah expected to bring for them?

For application

1. **22:1–31.** Catholic devotion links this psalm closely with the Passion of Jesus on the Cross. How has the psalm influenced the way you participate in his suffering? When are you most likely to pray the psalm?
2. **22:4–5.** Where are you most apt to have trouble trusting in the Lord? Do you ever look to the trust in God that the saints and other prayer warriors had in order to bolster your own? What do you do to build trust even when times are not difficult?
3. **22:14–15.** During intense physical or mental suffering, how readily do you resort to prayer? Does your suffering distract you from prayer, or does it deepen prayer? What comfort, if any, do you derive from prayer at such times? Do you ever recruit others to pray for you, especially if you find prayer difficult?

Psalm 23

For understanding

1. **23:4.** To what does the Psalmist refer by calling his situation “the shadow of death”? For what does a shepherd use a rod? How does he use a staff?
2. **23:5.** What does the Psalmist perhaps have in view? To what does “anoint my head” refer? When was applying olive oil to the head or face done? How does St. Cyril of Jerusalem interpret the expressions of God’s action in this verse?
3. **23:6.** By whom will the Psalmist be pursued? According to some, on whose lips is spoken the desire to live in God’s presence? How else could one read this prayer?

For application

1. **23:1–6.** On what occasions do you recite this psalm? How often do you pray it out of trust in God’s guidance for yourself or others?
2. **23:4.** According to the note for this verse, the shepherd’s rod is a weapon against predators; it can also be considered a tool of discipline (e.g., Prov 13:24). How does the Lord discipline those he loves? How has he disciplined you?
3. **23:6.** Given your state in life, what would it mean for you to dwell in the house of the Lord? Assuming you do not belong to the clerical or religious state, what access do you have to places where you can pray, such as a church? How often do you take advantage of them?

Psalm 24

For understanding

1. **24:1.** What does the Psalmist's profession of faith claim? What does Paul quote this passage to say?
2. **24:4.** What are "clean hands"? What constitutes a pure heart? Why does the Psalmist expect those with a pure heart to receive a blessing? Where does Jesus echo this verse? To what may lifting up one's "soul to what is false" refer?

For application

1. **24:1.** If the earth and all that is in it are the Lord's, what is man's place there? According to Catholic social teaching, to whom do the goods of the earth belong? If I have the right to claim certain land as my property, how absolute is my ownership? As it pertains to my property, what is my responsibility to others?
2. **24:7, 9.** These verses call upon the Temple gates to expand so as to admit the Lord of Hosts (represented by the Ark of the Covenant). What are the gates of the soul? How would you expand their capacity to let in the Lord?

Psalm 25

For understanding

1. **25:4.** Which of the Lord's ways are spelled out in this psalm? How are these attributes of God made known in the OT?
2. **25:8–15.** What roles does the Lord play in a man's life? What path is revealed to him, and how?

For application

1. **25:3.** What does it mean to wait for the Lord? According to the next two verses, what does the Psalmist wait for the Lord to do?
2. **25:7.** How often have the sins of your youth come back to haunt your thoughts and prayers? What anxiety do they cause you? How might making a general confession of your past life restore peace and confidence?

Psalm 26

For understanding

1. **26:2.** What does the Psalmist invite God to do? Why does he have nothing to hide?
2. **26:7.** What is the Psalmist's song of thanksgiving? As part of a thanksgiving liturgy, what would he do?

For application

1. **26:4–5.** Read the note for v. 4. Since one must associate with all sorts of people in business and social situations, how can one avoid sitting with false men and evildoers? Of what kind of prolonged involvement with them is the Psalmist thinking? How might it apply to you?
2. **26:6.** This verse is recited in its entirety by the priest during the Extraordinary Form of the Mass and in abbreviated form during the Ordinary Form. What is the purpose of washing the hands, according to the note for this verse? If you are a layperson, how do you prepare yourself to attend Mass?
3. **26:8.** Do you ever make visits to the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass? If your parish has scheduled periods of Eucharistic adoration, have you committed to a time slot? If not, why not? If so, how has that commitment affected your devotion to the Eucharist?

Psalm 27

For understanding

1. **27:6.** What does the Psalmist promise to offer? What is the Lord's tent?
2. **27:8.** What is this verse an invitation to do? In OT times, what did this mean?
3. **27:13.** What is "the land of the living"? What is the Psalmist confident will happen, thanks to God's deliverance? To what does being cut off from the land of the living amount?

For application

1. **27:3.** What kinds of personal setbacks threaten your trust in the Lord? For example, how do attacks on your reputation, such as might come through social media, cause it to falter? How do you build trust in God at such times?
2. **27:4.** Why should the faithful commit precious resources to beautify their places of worship? What difference does the beauty of a church building make to your worship?
3. **27:8.** Some Catholics claim that an intimate relationship with God is not possible, at least not for themselves. What is your opinion? What would such a relationship look like? How often have you asked the Lord for one? As you examine your life up to now, how has he answered your prayer?

Psalm 28

For understanding

1. **28:2.** What is the traditional posture for prayer referred to here? In what direction did Solomon encourage Israel to pray? To what does the “most holy sanctuary” refer?
2. **28:8.** To whom is the title “the Lord’s anointed” given? In view of the preceding line, who else may be accorded this title?

For application

1. **28:2.** Gestures used in prayer often express the attitudes of the prayer. For example, what difference does it make to prayer if you stand or sit rather than kneel or lie prostrate? What can praying with clasped hands signify, as distinct from hands held out palms up or raised over the head? Which gestures do you commonly use during liturgical prayer? during private prayer?

Psalm 29

For understanding

1. **29:1–11.** At what does this psalm of praise marvel? What god did Canaanite mythology hail? What counterclaim does the Psalmist make?
2. **29:3.** What is the voice of the Lord? For what does its mention seven times in the central stanzas suggest that it may provide the background? What does the Lord’s voice “upon the waters” envision?
3. **29:5.** For what are the cedars of Lebanon famous? For what was cedar from Lebanon used? Before the Lord’s awesome majesty, however, what happens to their sturdy trunks?

For application

1. **29:5–9.** As the climate changes and storms become more violent, what might be the religious response of people of faith to the devastation they cause? How would it be possible to hear the voice of the Lord in all this?
2. **29:10–11.** Nonetheless, who is in charge of natural phenomena? When nature seems to conspire against a community, for what should the community ask the Lord?

Psalm 30

For understanding

1. **Topical Essay: Thanksgiving Psalms.** From a literary perspective, how are psalms of thanksgiving closely related to psalms of lament? In the Old Testament, what are the five basic elements of thanksgiving psalms? In the New Testament, what six elements link the ancient psalms and meals as part of the background to the Church’s celebration of the Eucharist? Theologically, how does this rich biblical tradition lead us to see the Eucharist as the *tôdāh* offering of the New Covenant?
2. **30:1–12.** What fills the speaker of this psalm with gratitude? In later Judaism, when was Ps 30 sung, and what did that feast commemorate? What has Christian tradition often read Ps 30 in reference to?
3. **30:9.** To what does “the dust” refer? What was believed in OT times about the souls of the dead?

For application

1. **30:5.** Think of a time when you went through a period of significant distress, of its duration, and then of how you came through it successfully. How deep was the level of your physical or emotional suffering? What thanks did you give to the Lord for its outcome?
2. **30:6.** Before that period of distress, what did you think about your own ability to handle problems? When the suffering first began, what changed in your thinking?
3. **30:11–12.** Has the resolution of these events become for you an occasion for giving testimony to God’s mercy?

Psalm 31

For understanding

1. **31:5.** In this verse, to what is “spirit” a reference? When did Jesus quote this verse? How did he thus end his life?
2. **31:9–10.** Though the Psalmist may have been ill, what can his language also indicate?

For application

1. **31:5.** If you have ever had occasion to apply this verse to yourself, what was the occasion? How serious was it, e.g., a matter of life and death, or something else? How did you intend to imitate Jesus as you prayed it?
2. **31:9–10.** Is the situation referred to in the previous question still ongoing? How do these verses reflect what you are going through?
3. **31:21.** If the situation has been resolved, to whom do you give credit for its resolution?

Psalm 32

For understanding

1. **32:1–2.** Who is the fortunate recipient of God’s mercy? What does Paul quote these verses to show? According to St. John Fisher, what are the three parts of the Sacrament of Penance?
2. **32:5.** When can confession take place? Normally, what does it involve doing?

For application

1. **32:3.** How can unconfessed sin affect one’s physical health? How might unrepentance make a bad situation worse? How did Jesus handle this kind of health problem (e.g., Lk 5:24)?
2. **32:7.** Corrie ten Boom, an Evangelical who was released from the Ravensbrück concentration camp during World War II, referred to her faith as a “hiding place” while there. How does intimacy with God serve as a hiding place for the devout, especially during difficult times?
3. **32:8–9.** God sometimes leads us in directions we would rather not go. Have you ever been like a horse or a mule before the Lord at such times? What kinds of resistance have you put up? Did you finally yield to his instruction?

Psalm 33

For understanding

1. **33:3.** When are new songs of praise composed? Following this tradition, with what new songs does the Book of Revelation resound?
2. **33:6.** What is the divine instrument of creation? How did God create without opposition or reliance on preexisting materials? By contrast, if the Lord opposes men’s plans, what do their words accomplish? What made all the hosts of the heavens?

For application

1. **33:2–3.** Do you play a musical instrument? Have you ever composed a hymn or even wanted to? What enjoyment do you derive from learning a new song or performing one? How does music enhance prayer, both liturgical and private?
2. **33:16–17.** How would you rephrase these verses in terms of modern military technology? How would the point remain the same? According to the next two verses, what provides salvation?

Psalm 34

For understanding

1. **34:8.** For what are tasting and seeing an analogy? According to St. Basil of Caesarea, what kind of taste is involved in receiving the Eucharist? Why does the Psalmist say “taste” rather than “be filled”?
2. **34:11–22.** In what role is the Psalmist speaking in these verses? Here and elsewhere in the OT, with what are wisdom and fear of the Lord closely allied? As one who follows this counsel, what can the righteous man expect? How does Peter paraphrase the Greek LXX of 34:12–16?

For application

1. **34:7.** What is your belief with respect to the ministry of angels? What devotion do you have to your guardian angel? How might praying for your angel’s intercession at difficult times increase your trust in the Lord?
2. **34:12–14.** These verses are quoted in 1 Pet 3:10–12. What point is Peter making? How does it build on what the Psalmist is teaching?

Psalm 35

For understanding

1. **35:1–3.** In what roles is the Lord called upon to act? For whom does the petitioner believe that God is deeply concerned?
2. **35:19.** By whom is the Psalmist despised? In quoting this passage, whose hatred is Jesus describing? How does Christian tradition interpret the whole of this psalm?

For application

1. **35:12–15.** Have you ever been faced with ingratitude from those for whom you have interceded in prayer? What was your relationship with them, and for what were you praying? How public was their campaign against your honor? How did you respond to it?
2. **35:26.** If your reputation were publicly attacked, how would you pray for the attackers? How similar to the Psalmist’s would your prayer be, or how similar to that of Jesus from the Cross? Would you ask for their forgiveness or for their attack to boomerang upon themselves?

Psalm 36

For understanding

1. **36:1.** How is sin personified? To what does lack of the fear of God amount? What does Paul cite this verse to demonstrate?
2. **36:9.** What is the fountain of life? What is the light of God’s countenance?

For application

1. **36:7.** How precious to you is God’s love for you? How often do you think of it? How do you return it?
2. **36:9.** God is often compared to the sun, whose light enables creatures to see. What kind of light does God give? What does it enable you to see?

Psalm 37

For understanding

1. **37:3.** What land is referred to here? What was the condition for living securely on the land?
2. **37:11.** Who are the meek? What inheritance will they and their children possess? Where does Jesus use the language of this verse? Insofar as “land” and “earth” translate the same word in both Hebrew and Greek, what does it appear that Jesus is promising the meek? What is widely held in Christian tradition about Canaan?
3. **37:27.** In this ancient context, before the full revelation of a blessed afterlife, what was the expectation regarding the righteous man? By contrast, what would happen to the offspring of the wicked man? To Christian ears, with what do the words of the Psalmist resonate?

For application

1. **37:1–2.** How often do you imagine yourself living the life of the rich and famous? What do you envy about them? How do these thoughts make you feel about your own social or economic status? What do you think of the Psalmist’s counsel in these verses?
2. **37:5.** How literally do you apply this verse to yourself? What reservations do you make when committing to your faith? How wholehearted is your commitment to the Lord?
3. **37:16.** If you count yourself among those who practice their Catholic faith regularly, how content are you with “the little” that you have? How ready are you to tithe on what you have?

Psalm 38

For understanding

1. **38:1–22.** As what does Christian tradition count this psalm? Having committed sin, by what is the Psalmist seized, and how does he regard it? With what is his confession of sin coupled? In connection with what does the superscription suggest this psalm was sung?
2. **38:11.** What kind of sickness do the symptoms in 38:2–8 suggest is meant? How do some interpret the language? If the psalm does not teach that every sickness is caused by sin, what does it affirm?

For application

1. **38:4.** The *Catechism* teaches that certain actions are grave sins. Etymologically, to what does *grave* refer? How heavy have your worst sins seemed to you?
2. **38:10.** Read the note for this verse. How does serious illness rob one of the joy and vibrancy of life? To those who claim that loss of one’s “quality of life” because of illnesses like cancer or ALS justifies euthanasia, how would you answer?
3. **38:15.** According to your faith, what answer do you think the Lord would give to the previous question?

Psalm 39

For understanding

1. **39:4–6.** With what do these verses deal? Where is this theme further developed? About what may the Psalmist be asking specifically?
2. **39:11.** How does the Psalmist understand his sickness? Ultimately, what kind of gesture is chastisement from the Lord?

For application

1. **39:1.** Read the note for this verse. How would complaining and acting bitter about God’s chastening sour your own reliance on God? How do you counter the temptation to complain?
2. **39:11.** The Psalmist complains that God’s chastisement consumes “what is dear to him”. If the Lord consumes what you hold dear, with what does he replace it?

Psalm 40

For understanding

1. **40:6–8.** Where is a Greek version of this passage quoted in the NT? In whose mouth are these words placed, and what does he affirm? According to Hebrews, what does the sacrifice of Jesus’ body on the Cross supersede, and why? Why does the NT insist that Jesus was sinless?
2. **40:6.** What does God desire from his people more than animal, food, and incense offerings? Regarding “an open ear”, how does the Hebrew read? Since the notions of “hearing” and “heeding” are closely connected in Hebrew, what does the idiom appear to mean? How does the Greek LXX read? Where did the words quoted in Heb 10:5 (which replaces “ears” with “a body”) come from?

For application

1. **40:5.** When was the last time you enumerated to yourself the wondrous deeds and graces you have received from the Lord? What virtue does that practice stimulate in you? What resolutions are likely to follow from it?
2. **40:9–10.** Witnessing is an effective form of evangelization. Have you ever shared with others the graces you have received from God? Have you ever hidden them out of fear or false humility?
3. **40:12.** Read the note for this verse. Have the consequences of some of your sins ever blocked your ability to see the Lord's work in you, in others, or in the situations themselves? For example, how might the consequences that followed from the betrayal of a relationship hamper your ability to see a way to resolve it?

Psalm 41

For understanding

1. **41:9.** Who is the Psalmist's betrayer? About whom does Jesus quote this verse? What does the expression "lifted his heel" seem to suggest? How does the Greek LXX read?
2. **41:10.** From what will the Lord raise the Psalmist? What kind of vindication seems to be in view?

For application

1. **41:4.** Substance abuse, such as abuse of tobacco or alcohol or even food, can cause illness. Have you ever abused a created thing with the result that your health has been damaged? If so, how did you seek healing? Did prayer help?
2. **41:9.** Even good friendships sometimes turn sour. If that has happened to you, how did the rift develop? How far toward hostility did things degenerate? Regardless of who is at fault, why is it important for you to forgive a former friend?

Psalm 42

For understanding

1. **42:2.** What does the Psalmist's thirst express? How may the metaphor be suggested by the Hebrew word for "soul"? To what is beholding the face of God a reference? To Christian readers, for what do these words articulate a desire?
2. **42:7.** What is meant by "deep calls to deep"? To what can the Hebrew *tehôm*, translated "deep", also refer? What does the Psalmist feel is happening to him?
3. **42:8.** What does God's steadfast love amount to? Where is God, even when the Psalmist is far from the Temple? According to St. John Chrysostom, why is there no need of a skill, acquired with great effort, to produce a spiritual melody to God?

For application

1. **42:1–2a.** Why is water a symbol for the Holy Spirit? When you experience a thirst for God, who slakes that thirst? How often do you ask the Holy Spirit for his refreshment?
2. **42:5.** What does it mean to be spiritually downcast? Is it just a sad mood, or is there more to it? How does the virtue of hope alleviate this condition?

Psalm 43

For understanding

1. **43:1–5.** How is this lament psalm related to Ps 42? What is the Psalmist's twofold prayer?
2. **43:3.** How are light and truth personified? What are God's holy hill and his dwelling?

For application

1. **43:3.** Where do you seek guidance for the direction of your life: from relatives or friends, from peers, from books, from other sources? If from God, how do you know when you have received the direction for which you are asking?
2. **43:4.** The Latin Mass begins with the first part of this verse, adding that God gives joy to one's youth. Have you ever actually felt the presence of God at Mass or in any other time of prayer? Regardless of your age, how does entering God's presence make you feel the joy of youth?

Psalm 44

For understanding

1. **44:17.** What question does this strong affirmation of loyalty rhetorically set up in 44:24? What do the faithful in exile proclaim? With what mystery does Ps 44 wrestle?
2. **44:22.** What weighs heavy on the devout of Israel? Though innocent of apostasy, for what does their association with the God of Israel and the covenant people mark them out? How does Paul apply the Greek LXX version of this passage in Rom 8:36? If he is adamant that no amount of suffering can separate the faithful from the unconquerable love of Christ, what does he say the hardships of the Christian life can accomplish?

For application

1. **44:1–3.** Has there ever been a “golden age” of Christianity? Why does it seem to many that the age of miracles has ended? Why, in spite of various renewal movements in the Church, does Christianity seem to be on the decline? What do you wish would happen to change this picture?
2. **44:13–16.** For what is Christianity ridiculed in modern culture? In what ways are Christians themselves to blame for the mockery they receive? How does Paul’s message in Rom 8:36ff. apply to Christians today?
3. **44:26.** When you pray for God to help you in times of trouble, what do you think could motivate him to answer?

Psalm 45

For understanding

1. **45:1–17.** In this psalm for a royal wedding, what three things does the Psalmist celebrate? Since the king whose marriage inspired the song is not identified, when was the psalm sung? After the fall of the Davidic monarchy, how did some Jews read the psalm?
2. **45:6.** While the wording suggests the speaker addresses God directly, what does the context suggest? What makes the David’s royal throne a divinely established throne? How does the Book of Hebrews apply the Greek LXX version of this passage to Jesus?
3. **45:9.** Who is the queen? Though the woman in this passage is sometimes identified with the king’s new bride, what makes this problematic? To whom does Catholic tradition see this as a reference? Where is Ophir, and for what was it renowned in biblical times?

For application

1. **45:7.** When you were anointed with chrism at your Baptism and again at your Confirmation, what was the mission given to you? How have you fulfilled it?
2. **45:10–11.** Eph 5:21–23 speaks of the need for subordination in marriage, with the husband as head over his wife. How do you understand this relationship? If you are married, how does it work in your marriage?

Psalm 46

For understanding

1. **46:4.** What does the river symbolize? To what does its peaceful, flowing imagery stand in sharp contrast? Since there is no actual river in the holy city, what do we make of the Psalmist’s language? How is John’s vision of the new and heavenly Jerusalem based in part on the image of God in this verse? Why does the Psalmist call Jerusalem the city of God? What does the epithet for the Lord as the Creator of heaven and earth imply?
2. **46:10.** In this one instance of divine speech in the psalm, what does the Lord exhort his people to do?

For application

1. **46:1–3.** What are some turbulent situations that cause modern mankind to tremble with fear? What do we think could cause the annihilation of the human race? What is the Christian’s reason for rejecting fear?
2. **46:10.** Jesus commands the sea to be still, and it obeys. Why does he command us to be still when waves of trouble threaten? How does stillness before God improve the situation?

Psalm 47

For understanding

1. **47:5.** To what does “God has gone up” probably refer? What reference to Jesus does Catholic tradition see? On what feast are selections from this psalm read?
2. **47:9.** Who are “the peoples”? What time does the psalm envision? What oath does drawing the peoples of the world into covenant with God fulfill? Who is the awaited “offspring” of Abraham?

For application

1. **47:1.** What does clapping of the hands signify? As a spontaneous gesture, what emotions can it express? Why does the Psalmist urge the congregation to applaud? Although applause is never used in Catholic liturgy, it often happens in non-liturgical settings such as informal prayer meetings. How does it aid prayer in such cases?
2. **47:6.** What are some of your favorite hymns of praise? What attracts you to them? How often do you sing them during private prayer?

Psalm 48

For understanding

1. **48:2.** If the reference to the “far north” is not a geographical statement, to what claim may it be a reference? If so, what counterclaim would the Psalmist be making?
2. **48:7.** To what is God’s judgment compared? What are the ships of Tarshish, and how far do they sail?
3. **48:8.** What reports are referred to here and by whom? On what is Zion securely founded? Although many thought that the city was unconquerable, what made it vulnerable? While Jerusalem is described in a way that is rhetorically overstated as applied to the earthly city, of which city is it literally true?

For application

1. **48:4–7.** In spiritual warfare, what enemies do you face? When you seriously resist them by invoking the name of Jesus, what happens to them (cf. Jas 4:7)?
2. **48:12–14.** The walls and battlements of ancient Jerusalem became an image of God as an impregnable defense. What defenses do we have against spiritual attack?

Psalm 49

For understanding

1. **49:7.** Who can buy his way out of death? How can unending life be purchased?
2. **49:15.** From what does the Psalmist believe God will save him? What is debated about what he anticipates? What alternatives does hope offer him?

For application

1. **49:5–9.** How long do you want to live on this earth? How does the Christian desire for heaven balance or outweigh earthly desire? How confident are you that you will live forever, that eternal life is yours? On what is that confidence based?
2. **49:16.** We live in an age of super-rich philanthropists who endow foundations that not only perpetuate their names but impose their agendas on whole societies. What concerns do you have about the ways they distribute their wealth? According to the Psalmist, what fate may be in store for them?

Psalm 50

For understanding

1. **50:14.** What kind of sacrifice is a thank offering? When could it be made? What did it entail? In view of 50:8–13, against what was the Psalmist’s polemic directed?
2. **50:16–21.** For what does the Lord rebuke the unfaithful of Israel? What transgressions are singled out for mention? As what does the passage function?

For application

1. **50:7.** Although the Lord summons his “faithful ones” (v. 5), he has a complaint against them regarding their sacrifices. What complaint do you imagine the Lord would have against faithful Christians today? For example, how might he regard the performance of liturgy or the lackluster pursuit of holiness among his people?
2. **50:17.** Why do children resist the discipline of their parents? If you are a parent, how do your children resist you? What would God say about your acceptance of his efforts to train you?

Psalm 51

For understanding

1. **51:1–19.** As a lament psalm that Christian tradition counts as one of the seven penitential psalms, what is this one often called? What are the essential elements of reconciliation that it presents? Where does the superscription place the psalm?
2. **51:4.** Against whom is sin an offense? When did David recognize this? As a sin “against you, you only”, what does the statement not deny? Why does Paul quote the Greek LXX of this passage in Rom 3:4? When is the Lord’s justice made manifest—not called into question?
3. **51:5.** By what does the Psalmist see his whole life marked? What point is not being made, here? Why do some think ritual impurity is meant? How does Christian tradition often read this verse? If this is not a personal fault for the descendants of Adam and Eve, what is it?
4. **51:16.** When does ritual sacrifice become unacceptable? According to the prophets, what does God desire? When will “right sacrifices” be made?

For application

1. **51:1ff.** In the Liturgy of the Hours, why is this psalm normally prayed on Fridays? What makes Friday a more penitential day than other days of the week?
2. **51:5.** The note for this verse alludes to the doctrine of Original Sin. Aside from specific sins, how does Original Sin manifest itself in your life? For example, how does it affect your desires, your preferences, and the conduct of your relationships with other people?
3. **51:17.** When trainers “break” horses, what are they trying to accomplish? What in the human spirit must be broken before the Lord, and what needs to be retained?

Psalm 52

For understanding

1. **52:2.** Of what is the tongue capable? To whom is “a sharp razor” possibly an allusion? What did he do?
2. **52:8.** What does the green olive tree symbolize? For whom is the image sometimes used? What is the house of God? Of what does his mercy consist?

For application

1. **52:4.** In typical conversation, what are “words that devour”? For example, what effect does negative or critical speech have on relationships? What kind of speech devours a person’s good name?

Psalm 53

For understanding

1. **53:1.** Who is the fool? What are fools also called? By saying “there is none that does good”, what is the Psalmist stressing by rhetorically overstating the situation? From a biblical perspective, to what can disbelief in God only lead?
2. **53:6.** From where do the Lord’s blessings radiate? What does the expression “restores the fortunes” in the psalms often envision? What does this expression seem to suggest about Ps 53, or at least its final verse?

For application

1. **53:1.** Do you know someone who was raised in the faith but rejected it, thinking that belief in God is not necessary to being a good person? Why do such people think that “being a good person” or being “nice” is enough to gain heaven? From the Christian viewpoint, why is such an attitude foolish?
2. **53:2.** Conversion stories usually testify to how God has taken the initiative and sought the convert. What are some conversion stories that have made an impression on you? What is your own conversion story?

Psalm 54

For understanding

1. **54:1–7.** In this lament psalm, who is the speaker? What does he do in the psalm? Against what backdrop is this psalm set?
2. **54:7.** By claiming “you have delivered me”, what is the Psalmist either celebrating or expecting? How do biblical writers sometime express confidence in the Lord’s intervention?

For application

1. **54:4.** When disasters happen, such as a house fire or flood, how do you turn to God as your helper and upholder? When you have needed help, how has he come through for you? For example, how has God provided unexpected help from others?

Psalm 55

For understanding

1. **55:13.** To what friend is the Psalmist referring? Of what is this friend guilty? Whom does he seem to have joined? Who are some of the persons close to David who betrayed him?
2. **55:20.** What covenant did the former friend violate?
3. **55:22.** What encouragement does the Psalmist offer? How does the Greek LXX read? What does the Psalmist thus invite others to do?

For application

1. **55:6–8.** How often have you desired to escape from troubles by moving to someplace different? If you were to relocate, how would you avoid taking your troubles along with you? All the same, how might a temporary change of scene, such as a retreat, help?
2. **55:12–14.** When friendship turns sour, trust is broken and communication suffers. In such a situation, on whom does Jesus lay the burden to try to maintain or restore communication?
3. **55:22.** Theoretically, most Catholics would say that the Lord would sustain them in times of trouble. Have you ever had occasion to put that theoretical trust to the test? When you had no alternative but to trust the Lord, what did you do to place and keep trust in him?

Psalm 56

For understanding

1. **56:8.** What appears to be meant by the Psalmist’s restless tossing? What does the touching image of teardrops collected in a flask signify? What is God pictured as keeping?
2. **56:9.** Whose side is the Psalmist certain that God is on?

For application

1. **56:3.** What causes you the most fear most of the time? Where do your thoughts first go when you feel afraid? If to the Lord, how do approach him with your fear?
2. **56:8.** How comforting is it to you that God knows what you are afraid of even better than you do? How can you use that knowledge to seek deliverance from that fear?

Psalm 57

For understanding

1. **57:2.** What does the epithet for the Lord as the Creator of heaven and earth imply about Israel's God? What does the psalm imply that God has for every person?
2. **57:3.** What are the twin attributes of God revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai? What do they often form in the Psalter?

For application

1. **57:2.** What purpose do you think God has for you? How is that purpose related to your state in life (e.g., married, clergy, religious)? How specific is your understanding of God's purpose for you (e.g., to accomplish a specific mission)?
2. **57:9.** In your prayer time, how often do you recall the Lord's benefits to you and yours? For what do you give him thanks? How many others know what you are grateful for?

Psalm 58

For understanding

1. **58:1.** Who are the gods referred to here? Why are they addressed as gods? What assembly do some scholars hold is otherwise meant?
2. **58:4.** How are evil judges like serpents that resist being controlled by snake charmers?
3. **58:10.** When will the righteous rejoice? Whose responsibility is it to punish the wicked? For much of the OT period, when was it believed that God's justice would be meted out to the just and the unjust? What had become clear through additional revelation by NT times? Only when will the Lord's vengeance on sin be fully revealed?

For application

1. **58:6–8.** What causes you to feel outrage? At such times, how does your prayer resemble that of the Psalmist? When you meet injustice, what do you pray will happen?

Psalm 59

For understanding

1. **59:5.** In what role does the title "Lord God of hosts" place the Lord? In what category are the Psalmist's enemies put? Because they are guilty of the same sins, what fate does he pray they will meet?
2. **59:11.** What does the Psalmist pray for his enemies to taste? Ultimately, what does he want God to do? Of what is the downfall of the wicked a reminder?

For application

1. **59:3–4a.** The Lord has promised that his disciples will encounter persecution of one sort or another. How have you experienced it, and from what source? Of what do your persecutors accuse you?
2. **59:16.** What is your position in the face of persecution, especially when it is persistent (vv. 14–15)? What spiritual armor do you have?

Psalm 60

For understanding

1. **60:4.** For what is the banner used? What does the Lord's banner signify, and with what provision?
2. **60:7.** Of what is Gilead the name? What blessing does Judah's scepter evoke? How was Jacob's blessing fulfilled in OT times? Ultimately, what kind of prophecy is this blessing?
3. **60:8.** What does the casting of a shoe upon Edom signal?

For application

1. **60:2.** When political, economic, and social problems threaten to make the land quake and the nation totter, where do you turn? When it comes to the welfare of the nation, for what do you pray? For what do you think the Lord would have you pray?

Psalm 61

For understanding

1. **61:2.** What may this verse indicate about the Psalmist's situation? What confidence does his call to God display? What does the "rock that is higher than I" represent?
2. **61:6–7.** What language does that of "all generations" and "for ever" echo? If everlasting life and dominion are desires for the king that are unfulfilled in OT times, when are they fulfilled? How?

For application

1. **61:2.** When you face danger, where do you go for safety? At times of spiritual attack, to whom do you turn?
2. **61:6.** Why is it important to pray for the pope? What do you pray for concerning him? What prayers should you offer for his successor, the next pope?

Psalm 62

For understanding

1. **62:11.** What is a numerical parallelism? Where is the existence of this kind of poetry attested?
2. **62:12.** What does the final line of the psalm imply about God's justice? What responsibility do we have toward God?

For application

1. **62:1.** Read the note for this verse. How do you still the inner noise in your mind and imagination? What is the difference between passive and active silence? How do you practice listening to the Lord?
2. **62:10.** If you have investments in financial markets, how closely do you follow market fluctuations? To what extent do they foster anxiety in you or your family? What impact do they have on your spiritual life?

Psalm 63

For understanding

1. **63:1–11.** In this lament psalm, to what does the speaker compare his desire for God? Where does he yearn to worship? In the meantime, how does he spend his sleepless nights? How does the prayer end?
2. **63:8.** To what is the Hebrew verb *dābaq* often used to refer?

For application

1. **63:1.** Jesus promises that "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4:14). What water is he talking about? How is the soul's thirst for God's presence still consistent with Jesus' promise? When do you find yourself thirsting for God?
2. **63:8.** Why do infants cling so tightly to their mothers? Why are they anxious when separated even momentarily from them? How is that tendency analogous to the soul's clinging to God?

Psalm 64

For understanding

1. **64:3.** What do the images of whetting tongues like swords and shooting arrows underscore about words?
2. **64:7.** What poetic justice is envisioned in this verse?

For application

1. **64:6b.** Who knows what thoughts and desires are hidden in the hearts of even good people? How often do you suspect your own motives, especially when it comes to speech?
2. **64:7.** Read the note for this verse. Has the Lord ever turned your own negative speech against you? If so, what have you learned from the experience?

Psalm 65

For understanding

1. **65:4.** In the language of divine election, whom has God chosen? What was the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles? What did it celebrate?
2. **65:7.** What is the traditional notion about the seas that is found in several psalms? To what do God's power to tame unruly seas and establish peace point? To what does the "tumult of the peoples" refer?
3. **65:8.** What conversion is in view here? Where did Israel have this reaction? What did God make "for signs and for seasons and for days and years"?

For application

1. **65:4.** Jesus tells his disciples that he has chosen them, rather than they him (Jn 15:16). How does that choice apply to you? How is his choice of you confirmed through the sacraments? Which ones particularly express that choice?
2. **65:9–11.** If you are a gardener—or, better, a farmer—what difference does the weather make to you? How needy do you feel when the weather remains dry or when there is too much rain? How grateful are you when rain comes in just the right amounts? How do you cope with the ups and downs of the spiritual life?

Psalm 66

For understanding

1. **66:4.** How does the whole of creation—plants, animals, land, sea, and sky—glorify God? What do the sights and sounds of the cosmos form? Who are invited to join in this praise?
2. **66:6.** What are the two related miracles of the Exodus and the Conquest referred to here? From where did the people of Israel rejoice at these events?

For application

1. **66:1–2.** In recent decades, "praise and worship" music has become popular, mostly in non-liturgical settings. What are some of the characteristics of such music? What does this "praise and worship" music add to the experience of both corporate and personal prayer?
2. **66:16.** Have you ever had the opportunity to witness to others what God has done for you? What makes personal witness such an effective evangelistic tool? If you have shared your story with believers before, how would you change it to appeal to non-believers?

Psalm 67

For understanding

1. **67:1–7.** For what is the speaker grateful in this thanksgiving psalm? What calling is central to this psalm? What other harvest does the harvest of crops signify? For which solemnity is Ps 67 featured as the responsorial psalm?
2. **67:7.** Who are called to reverence God by serving him? When does what the Psalmist hopes for in the OT become a reality? Who are to worship the same God side by side in the Church?

For application

1. **67:4.** After more than two thousand years, who has not yet heard the proclamation of the gospel? What is the "new evangelization"? To whom is it directed? How urgent is the need for it?

Psalm 68

For understanding

1. **68:17.** What chariotry is referred to here? How do angels sometimes appear to human eyes? What is perhaps a better way to read this verse? What does this alternative imply about where God's presence is located?
2. **68:18.** How does the Lord's victorious march from Egypt to the Promised Land culminate? What did the Song of the Sea, which celebrates the Exodus and sea crossing, foresee about the establishment of God's sanctuary? Which captives

is God leading in his train? In what senses can we understand the tribute that flowed into Israel from other nations? How does Paul paraphrase this verse in Eph 4:8, speaking of Jesus? What does the Lord's ascent to the Temple on Zion thus prefigure? What does Paul infer about gifts received by the Lord?

For application

1. **68:5–6.** How do you understand the Church's "preferential option for the poor"? Who are the poor in your area? What is your role in serving them?
2. **68:20.** Read the note for this verse. What would you consider a "living death"? Is there any form of bondage (an abusive relationship, a mental illness, a dead-end occupation) from which you desire to escape? If escape from it belongs to the Lord, how might he provide it?

Psalm 69

For understanding

1. **69:9.** What is "zeal for your house"? When did Jesus' disciples remember this passage? How do scornful words affect those who love and serve God? How does Paul apply these words to Christ in Rom 15:3?
2. **69:21.** What is gall? Far from showing pity, what do the Psalmist's enemies try to do? When do allusions to this passage appear in the Gospels?

For application

1. **69:6.** The Psalmist prays that no one suffer shame or dishonor because of his actions. If you were to suffer an attack, such as an accusation of unethical or immoral conduct, who besides yourself would be implicated? If you occupy a prominent position, even just as head of a household, how do you protect others who work or live with you?
2. **69:9.** Which of the four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) is most closely associated with the virtue of zeal? Can zeal be associated with all of the cardinal virtues in some way? What is your experience of zeal for the Lord's house?
3. **69:22–28.** Hurling imprecations at your enemies may be uncharitable, but how often have you wanted similar disasters to fall on your opponents? When certain enemies engage in ruthless persecution, how do you manage your anger toward them? How would you imitate Jesus' response from the Cross?

Psalm 70

For understanding

1. **70:1–5.** In this lament psalm, for what does the speaker, his life in danger, cry out to the Lord and plead? What sharp contrast does the psalm present? Of what did a "memorial offering" in the Temple consist?

For application

1. **70:4.** Scripture sometimes commands us to rejoice despite hardships (e.g., Phil 4:4). How is it possible to rejoice under difficult conditions? What recommendations for resolving this conundrum does Paul offer in Phil 4:5–9?

Psalm 71

For understanding

1. **71:6.** When does biblical faith recognize that God's work in our life begins? Remaining strong in his devotion to God, what does the Psalmist desire to do?
2. **71:20.** To whom is suffering attributed even when sin is not a factor? In biblical teaching, what falls outside the scope of divine Providence? In what other book of the Bible is this lesson taught?

For application

1. **71:6.** What is the history of your relationship with the Lord? When, for example, were you baptized, and what instruction in the faith have you had? What does "leaning on the Lord" mean to you?

2. **71:20.** Trees need wind to bend them and strengthen wood fibers as they grow, so that when mature they can stand up to strong gales. How have hardships matured you? With the wisdom gained from working through difficulties, how has your trust in God's Providence matured? Where does it still need strengthening?

Psalm 72

For understanding

1. **72:8.** What were the Solomonic dimensions of the kingdom of Israel? From which sea to which sea does the Psalmist wish the kingdom to expand? How does Sirach interpret these boundaries? How does Zechariah use this language? What were the ends of the earth thought to be?
2. **72:17.** What prayer is the Psalmist offering? How does the Greek LXX read, and what does it echo? By means of this biblical allusion, how is the ideal king of Israel identified? According to the NT, in whom is the Abrahamic promise of worldwide blessing fulfilled?

For application

1. **72:1.** According to Is 11:1–5, the spirit of the Lord rests on the Davidic king, giving him charismatic gifts to help him reign justly. What charisms are especially needed by bishops in the world today? What purpose would these charisms serve? How should they help the bishop in his own growth in holiness?
2. **72:15.** Bishops and priests are responsible for the holiness of the people in their charge. What is your practice of prayer for them? Why is it necessary to intercede for them even when you are critical of their ministry?

Psalm 73

For understanding

1. **73:1–28.** In this wisdom psalm, what struggle does the speaker relate? Why was he initially jealous of sinners? What did their prosperity make him wonder? What was their “end” that he came to understand as he prayed in the Temple? What contrast does the psalm make? Who was Asaph?
2. **73:1.** What does the word “good” in this verse anticipate? Who are the upright? Who are the pure in heart? What does Jesus promise that the pure in heart will see?
3. **73:24.** What is the Lord's counsel? What is awaited? What does the Psalmist himself perhaps envision; and, if so, what does the passage envision?

For application

1. **73:13–14.** If other people get away with flouting morality without apparent consequence, why should you keep yourself on the straight path? Have you ever chafed under the restrictions of the moral law or grown impatient with spiritual disciplines? And yet, what keeps you faithful to them?
2. **73:21–22.** Heb 12:15 cautions against allowing a “root of bitterness” to grow in the Christian community. What damage can it cause? What makes it so hard to uproot? According to vv. 23–26 in this psalm, how can you remove bitterness against others from your own heart?

Psalm 74

For understanding

1. **74:1.** What do the words “for ever” suggest about the exile? Despite the Psalmist's emotion, what does Scripture insist that God never does? Of what is exile a manifestation?
2. **74:14.** In Semitic mythology, how are the primordial forces of evil and chaos represented, and how are they subdued? Why does the Bible cast the Lord in this conquering role? For the Psalmist, what does this mean?
3. **74:20.** For what is the Mosaic covenant, by which Israel became the elect people of God, the basis? Because of this relationship, what does it mean that the Lord's own name is at stake before the nations?

For application

1. **74:3–8.** Complaints sometimes appear in the media that Catholics in countries like ours fail to help when other Catholic churches around the world (e.g., in Egypt, Iraq, and India) are vandalized or destroyed. What organizations exist to help them? Are you involved with any of these aid organizations? If you had the opportunity to help, how would you like to assist?
2. **74:12–17.** How does taking the long view of human history help one accept that God's Providence triumphs eventually?

Psalm 75

For understanding

1. **75:2.** What is the "set time"? What does the Lord declare himself to be like in his judgments? Through whom does Christian faith teach that God will judge the world?
2. **75:7.** How do the Lord's judgments affect the present order? Of whom is this reiterated in 75:10? With whose songs and sayings do we see this theme expressed in Scripture?

For application

1. **75:6.** In your experience, who is more likely to turn to the Lord when help is urgently needed, the poor or the rich? Why? When you run into financial trouble, where do you first turn for help?
2. **75:10.** The note for v. 4 defines *horn* as a symbol of strength. In verse 10, what are the horns of the righteous? Note the passive voice of the verb in the last line: Who exalts the horns of the righteous? What does it mean for the strength of the righteous to be exalted?

Psalm 76

For understanding

1. **76:1.** In what kind of relationship did Israel live with the Lord? Why is God's effort to draw near to one nation not a rejection of other nations? When would this mission to the world be fully activated?
2. **76:10.** What does "the wrath of men shall praise you" mean? What does the verse seem to say? Who are the "residue of wrath"?

For application

1. **76:1.** When you say of someone, "I know that name", what image comes to mind? What does "know the name" of Jesus mean? In the Christian understanding, how is knowledge of his name more than a simple act of recognition?
2. **76:11.** Have you ever made a promise to the Lord that you either did not keep or fulfilled only partially? What was the promise? What prevented you from keeping it? What is to prevent you from keeping it now?

Psalm 77

For understanding

1. **77:1–20.** How does this lament psalm move from discouragement to encouragement? Whom do many scholars think the "I" of the psalm represents? How is hope reawakened? To what does the Psalmist thus discover that his anguish is in part due?
2. **77:7–9.** What are these questions of complaint meant to accomplish? What do they subtly suggest is at stake about God's character?
3. **77:13.** By acknowledging that God's way is holy, what is the psalm confessing? What kind of act is God's discipline? What answer does the question "What god is great like our God?" imply?

For application

1. **77:5–6.** In times of global or national stress or persecution, what thoughts come to mind as you seek the Lord in prayer? When you think of God's activity in the past, what concerns about his silence in the present come to mind? What encouragement do the lives of the saints and martyrs provide?

2. **77:11.** In times of trial or confusion, why rehearse to yourself the deeds of the Lord? What consolation do you expect from doing that?

Psalm 78

For understanding

1. **78:8.** How does the Mosaic Law describe a delinquent son? To which generation of Israel does this description especially apply, and what did the Song of Moses call it?
2. **78:11–20.** What events do these verses recall? How did the Lord redeem his people? Regrettably, how did Israel respond?
3. **Word Study: Chose (78:68, 70).** How often does the verb meaning “select” or “choose” appear in the OT? To what does it refer, and what does that imply? In the Bible, what does one choose? In theological contexts, what heightened significance does the verb take on, and what is an example of this? If this was neither a random selection nor one based on Israel’s merits, what motivated the choice? What are some other divine selections? What ancient pledge did God’s selection of Jerusalem/Zion as the home of his Temple fulfill?

For application

1. **78:4.** According to the *Catechism*, “Parents are the principal and first educators of their children” (CCC 1653); at the same time, “Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith” (CCC 2226). Did your parents fulfill their mission of educating you in the faith? If you are a parent, how have you taken on this responsibility with your children? What are the most important things children should learn through family catechesis?
2. **78:5–8.** Every generation needs to be catechized anew. In your estimation, how is your generation preparing the next to “set their hopes on God” and live their faith? Despite having 12 years and more of Catholic education, why are so many young people abandoning their faith? What will bring them back to it?
3. **78:24–25.** According to recent studies, only one-third of Catholics believe that the Eucharist is the real Body and Blood of Christ. What is your belief? How well do you know what the Church actually teaches about it?

Psalm 79

For understanding

1. **79:4.** To which neighbors is this verse alluding? What did the prophets envision for them because of this treachery?
2. **79:10.** What mistake does the Psalmist worry that other nations will make? What role does the Psalmist appeal to God to assume?

For application

1. **79:2.** What respect do Christians owe to the bodies of the dead? Although the Church permits cremation, why does she prefer burial of the unburned body?
2. **79:8.** If their forefathers were the ones who sinned, why should their iniquity be a concern to the Psalmist? How does the current generation suffer for the sins of the previous generations? For example, how might a teetotaling son suffer the consequences of his father’s alcoholism?

Psalm 80

For understanding

1. **80:3.** What prayer does the Psalmist make about Israel? How else can the verse be translated, and what relationship does that indicate? In petitioning God to “let your face shine”, what is the Psalmist asking?
2. **80:17.** What is the Lord’s hand? Who is the man of God’s right hand? How might this language arise from the topography of ancient Jerusalem? What reference does Jewish tradition see here? How does St. Robert Bellarmine explain that the passage refers to Christ?

For application

1. **80:2.** The Church prays this prayer during the season of Advent. Even though Jesus came to save us two thousand years ago, why does the Church still ask him to come for that purpose? When will his salvation ultimately be finished?

2. **80:8–13.** These verses reflect much about the history of the Church: how she emerged from a small Middle Eastern country and spread throughout the known world, and how in recent centuries she has been ravaged by godless philosophical systems, revolutions, and totalitarian regimes. What dangers do you see the Church facing today? What can be done to stem the exodus from the Church by the young, who are the future of the Church?
3. **80:14.** What renewal movements are at work toward restoration and renewed evangelism in the Church? Where do the saints we need come from, and how are they formed? Where do you see the Holy Spirit at work?

Psalm 81

For understanding

1. **81:3.** Of what kind of trumpet is the Psalmist thinking? What does the new moon mark in the Israelite calendar? What feast day was the first day of the seventh month? Which of Israel's religious feasts fell in the middle of the month when the moon was full? Which of these is "our feast day"?
2. **81:6–16.** Who is the speaker in these verses? For what are his words an appeal? Of what blessings does he remind people?
3. **81:12.** How does God sometimes respond to the stubbornness of his people? Why does he allow them to rely on their own wisdom and strength?

For application

1. **81:12.** Why is it that, every time human beings solve one problem on their own or through their technology, another one takes its place? Why is it never a good thing for God to leave us to our own devices?
2. **81:13–14.** Christians are taught that they face three principal enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. How might listening to and acting on the word of God subdue each of these?

Psalm 82

For understanding

1. **82:4.** What special duty did kings and judges have? What did they thus reflect?
2. **82:6.** Why did the title "gods" appear to have been borne by persons who judged Israel? On what basis did Christianity develop the doctrine of deification—the belief that baptized believers are divinized by sharing in God's supernatural life? About what is deification or participation in the divine nature another way of speaking? When Jesus cites this passage in Jn 10:34 to rebut the charge of blasphemy, what is his argument? According to St. Irenaeus, of what "gods" does the Psalmist speak when he says "you are gods"? In scriptural language, who are the "sons of the Most High"?

For application

1. **82:2.** How long has it been since abortion was legalized in this country? When did Catholic opposition to abortion begin, and how long is it likely to continue? Why is it so difficult to have the laws favoring abortion reversed?
2. **82:8.** Since God is ultimately the judge of all the earth, why must Christians keep praying for his judgment? What form would you expect his judgment to take?

Psalm 83

For understanding

1. **83:1–18.** In this lament psalm, what does the poet urge God to do? In pleading for divine retribution, why does he desire humiliation rather than obliteration for adversaries? Who are the peoples listed in 83:6–8? What does the absence of any reference to Babylon suggest about when the psalm was composed?
2. **83:16.** For what are disgrace and defeat viewed as an opportunity?

For application

1. **83:18.** The apparitions at Fatima concluded with the so-called "miracle of the sun", viewed by over 80,000 people and reported in newspapers. What is the purpose of miracles? What kind of miracle would convince God's enemies today that he truly is Most High over all the earth? Or would any miracle satisfy?

Psalm 84

For understanding

1. **84:3.** For whom is the Lord's Temple a place of safety? How many altars did the sanctuary have? When is the Psalmist's personal relationship with God evident?
2. **84:7.** How would pilgrims nearing the end of a long journey increase in strength?

For application

1. **84:2.** Read the note for this verse. How does worship engage your body? How do various gestures and prayer positions enhance the worship of your heart? Which positions do you find most helpful for personal prayer?
2. **84:10.** If you had your wish, where would you most like to go and pray? What position in the Lord's house would you prefer to occupy, as opposed to being somewhere else? Why is it better to be unnoticed than to be the center of attention?

Psalm 85

For understanding

1. **85:10–13.** What attributes of God revealed at Sinai are poetically described here? Why are these attributes, sometime personified as divine servants, often celebrated in Scripture? What attributes does the NT teach that Jesus manifests? In what revelation is this summarized?
2. **85:11.** What is another word for faithfulness? According to St. Leo the Great, how does the birth of Christ accord with David's prophecy in this psalm?

For application

1. **85:8.** How does the Lord speak? How do you prepare yourself to hear him? If it has been awhile since you have heard him speak to you, what may account for his apparent silence?
2. **85:9.** The note for this verse suggests that it is an encouragement to Israel to complete the rebuilding of the Temple. Is there something you hoped to accomplish for the Lord but failed to complete? What were some of the reasons? What prevents you from resuming the project?

Psalm 86

For understanding

1. **86:1–17.** How does this lament psalm begin, continue, and end? From whom does the Psalmist cry out to be rescued? What does his conviction that God is good, merciful, and powerful mean to him?
2. **86:9.** What is the Psalmist's vision of the future? How does the Book of Revelation cite this passage as the climax of salvation history? As the fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham, what mission of the Church does it stand behind?

For application

1. **86:4.** How does God gladden the souls of his servants? How has he gladdened yours? How might that gladness persist even in times of desolation?
2. **86:11.** Assuming you are a devout and well-catechized adult, why pray for God to teach his way to you? What does it mean for him to unite your heart?
3. **86:17.** For whose benefit does the Psalmist want God to show him a sign of favor? Has God's favor to you ever been a sign that others could see?

Psalm 87

For understanding

1. **87:2.** What is the basis of Zion's election? What is meant by "the gates"? What figure of speech is the Psalmist using?
2. **87:4.** To what does the Lord's "knowledge" of those from distant lands point? What is not entirely clear about it? Who is Rahab here? For whom is Zion the birthplace? How does Paul speak about the heavenly Jerusalem?

For application

1. **87:4.** Why do Catholics refer to the Church as a mother? How does the Church nurture her people? What maternal roles does she play even for Christians who do not belong to her visible structure?

Psalm 88

For understanding

1. **88:7.** How was suffering generally viewed? What room did this leave for the notion of an innocent sufferer? What about suffering was only gradually revealed? What does the Psalmist feel like?
2. **88:8.** Why do the Psalmist's companions shun him? What are two alternative explanations? Either way, what makes his ordeal more painful?
3. **88:11.** What is Abaddon? For what is it another name?

For application

1. **88:1–7.** What is the worst illness you have experienced? How long did it last? On a spiritual level, what are some of the hardships that the illness brought on? Did you bring them to the Lord?
2. **88:13–14.** Several of the psalms raise complaints that the Lord seems to “hide his face” in times of trouble. To what extent might it be permissible for you to complain as the Psalmist does? How can you complain to God without blaming him for your misfortune? If you have a complaint, how should you also express confidence in his mercy?

Psalm 89

For understanding

1. **89:27.** What benefits did first-born sons in biblical times possess more of than their younger brothers? Because David and his royal successors on the throne are given this preeminence over other kings of the Near East, what are they eligible to inherit? What does the title also signal about the nation of Israel? When does Ps 89 reach its complete fulfillment? Where does the Book of Revelation allude to this passage? How does the NT also describe Jesus?
2. **89:30–32.** What did it mean that the Davidic covenant was unconditional? However, what did it mean that David and his successors, as members of the community of Israel, continued to live under the Mosaic covenant? In this situation, what is the Lord bound to do?
3. **89:38–51.** What does the Psalmist lament? However, because the humiliation of David's line is ultimately the Lord's doing, what is he convinced that God has the power to do?

For application

1. **89:1–4.** Why is it appropriate to begin a period of prayer with expressions of praise. How does praise of God's steadfast love and his faithfulness, repeated many times in this psalm, influence the rest of your prayer?
2. **89:34.** The note for this verse explains how God remained true to his word, fulfilling it in Jesus. Despite setbacks in your own life and in that of your family, how has he remained faithful to you? While God's faithfulness to you is absolute, how firm is your faithfulness to him?
3. **89:47.** How often do you reflect on the measure of your own life, on its brevity and purpose? The Psalmist indicates that the lives of the “sons of men” are vanity. Do you agree or disagree? For what purpose has God created our lives?

Psalm 90

For understanding

1. **90:2.** What is God's age? Since all created things change, what about God? According to St. Irenaeus, why are created things inferior to the One who formed them?
2. **90:5.** To what is the brevity of human life compared? Why is the point stressed in the psalm?
3. **90:12.** What wisdom do we gain from reflecting on life's pains and frustrations?

For application

1. **90:1–2.** In an environment where everything changes and nothing stays new, what comfort might you derive from the fact that God is eternal and never changes?
2. **90:4–6.** God’s plan of salvation has been unfolding since the beginning of history, but each human being lives through only a few moments of it. If your life is so ephemeral, of what importance is it in the overall plan? What practical difference does it make for you to be aware that the larger plan exists?
3. **90:11–12.** What are the “four last things”? How often do you reflect on them and on how they apply to you?
4. **90:17.** What are some of your life’s accomplishments? How long do you expect them to last or be remembered? Which of your works is God most likely to consider establishing?

Psalm 91

For understanding

1. **91:11–12.** As what do angels serve? Over whom do they have charge? When does the devil cite these verses? Without questioning the truth of the passage, why does Jesus refuse to leap?
2. **91:13.** What do the lion, the adder, and the serpent represent? For whom is victory over them promised?

For application

1. **91:1–2.** What are the key words in these verses? Why is constancy in relating to the Lord (dwelling with him) necessary if we are to expect his protection?
2. **91:5–7.** What fears or concerns (e.g., economic, medical, environmental) do you share with other people? What difference does your confidence in God make in how you handle them?
3. **91:14–16.** Jesus promises that his disciples will undergo persecution, including the possibility of martyrdom (cf. Lk 21:16–19). How does that square with the promise here of God’s protection and long life?

Psalm 92

For understanding

1. **92:6.** Who are the dull and the stupid? What wisdom do they lack? Why is the Psalmist confident of this?
2. **92:12–14.** With what do these verses deal? With what was the interior of Solomon’s Temple adorned? What belief does it reflect?

For application

1. **92:1.** For what do you give thanks? How often do you include thanksgiving in your prayers? Why should you maintain an “attitude of gratitude” when times are hard?
2. **92:14.** Some olive trees in Israel are centuries old yet still produce fruit. What fruit can an old person bear once his “productive years” have ended? How would you encourage it?

Psalm 93

For understanding

1. **93:2.** Where did the Lord’s throne in heaven have its counterpart on earth? What kingship over the earth does the Lord have, and what did he *not* have to do to gain it?
2. **93:5.** Of what is God the Creator? Where are these made known to Israel? From what is holiness a state of separation?

For application

1. **93:5.** The note for this verse defines what holiness is. In our modern social and cultural environment, how does one separate himself from occasions of moral defilement? Does that mean that one can never enjoy entertainments or social gatherings? If not, what sorts of things or events can one enjoy and still pursue holiness?

Psalm 94

For understanding

1. **94:1.** What is God's vengeance? Who has the right to exact vengeance on sinners?
2. **94:17.** What is the land of silence? For much of the OT period, what was it thought that none of the dead would do?

For application

1. **94:19.** According to St. Ignatius Loyola, a spiritual consolation is an interior movement in which the soul experiences God's love for it or is spontaneously moved to express ardent love for God. Have you ever experienced such consolations? If these occur in periods of tribulation, how do they move you toward greater trust in God?
2. **94:20.** How can legislators who claim to be following their Christian faith initiate or promote laws that contradict biblical morality? On what principles do they actually frame their statutes?

Psalm 95

For understanding

1. **95:3.** What reasons does this verse introduce? Over what were deities worshiped in the biblical world thought to have dominion? How does that contrast with the God that Israel serves?
2. **95:11.** What was God's oath of disinheritance in Num 14:21–23 about? What was the place of God's rest? In the Book of Hebrews, against what is the passage cited as a warning?

For application

1. **95:2.** Although the background for this verse is liturgical, how does it apply to the way you start a time of personal prayer?
2. **95:8.** How do you recognize when a child is hardening his heart against a parent's discipline? How do you recognize when your own heart is hardening against the Lord's voice? How does such an attitude become a pattern of behavior?

Psalm 96

For understanding

1. **96:7.** Who are the "families of the peoples"? What ancient promise might speaking of "families" evoke?
2. **96:8.** To what does "bring an offering" refer here? To what does the call for Gentiles to bring offerings to the Lord point?

For application

1. **96:8.** What do you offer the Lord so as to give glory to his name? For example, how do you contribute to the support of the Church? What do you offer him of yourself, not only of your external goods but of your internal ones as well?
2. **96:11–13.** In these verses, all nature rejoices because the Lord comes to judge the earth. How eager are you for his judgment? What might make you afraid of it or reluctant to welcome it as it comes? Why is it best that his judgment of you take place now rather than after your death?

Psalm 97

For understanding

1. **97:2.** What kind of darkness is referred to here? What is this language also used to describe? Upon what foundation does God's kingdom rest? Since the same ideals attach to kingship in Israel, when will they be fully manifest? Where is God's throne, and where is its counterpart on earth?
2. **97:3.** In this verse, of what is fire an image, and what does it consume?

For application

1. **97:6.** Photos of the stars taken through powerful telescopes provide a view of the heavens and distant galaxies that the ancients could not have imagined. How do such images move you to consider the Lord's righteousness? How do they expand your view of his glory?

Psalm 98

For understanding

1. **98:1–9.** What does this psalm celebrate? What events are viewed as demonstrations of God’s power and love for his elect people? Having shown himself a Warrior in the past, what does the Lord announce for the future? How does this involve even the onlooking world? For which solemnity is Ps 98 featured in the Church’s liturgy as the responsorial psalm?
2. **98:3.** Why could God never forget his people or his commitments? When does Mary appear to have this verse in mind? How is this verse at once an exaggeration and a literal expectation?

For application

1. **98:1.** The introduction to this psalm mentions that it is used as the responsorial psalm for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Why is this psalm appropriate for that feast? Why is Mary’s Immaculate Conception one of God’s “marvelous things”?
2. **98:4–8.** Our Northern European culture prefers a restrained formality at times of celebration, whereas more southerly cultures revel in making joyful noise. Which seems to you more appropriate for worship, and why? What does the “sober intoxication of the Spirit” mean for the way one might rejoice?

Psalm 99

For understanding

1. **99:3.** How is the name YHWH probably pronounced, and how is it translated in the RSV2CE? What mystery does this name bear, and how must it be treated? What does God’s holiness mean?
2. **99:5.** What is the Lord’s footstool? What did its lid look like? How does artwork from the ancient Near East often portray enthroned monarchs? According to St. Jerome, when Jesus assumed a human nature, what became a footstool for God? How did that change after he rose and ascended victoriously into heaven?

For application

1. **99:3.** God’s holiness, defined in the note for this verse, is mentioned three times in this psalm. How are you called to participate in his holiness? Since without holiness no one can see God (Heb 12:14), what should be the goal of your life?
2. **99:8.** According to the note for this verse, the Lord can be a strict disciplinarian, as he was for Moses and Aaron. If you have served the Lord faithfully all your life but committed one grave sin in all that time, how do you think all your good works should modify the severity of the Lord’s judgment of your sin? Why is it better for you that the Lord should be strict rather than lenient?

Psalm 100

For understanding

1. **100:1–5.** What does this psalm of praise invite peoples from all lands to do? What terse summary does it offer? What is the central affirmation of the psalm, and by what invitations is it preceded and followed? During what kind of liturgy may Ps 100 have been sung?
2. **100:3.** What belief of Israel is contrary to that of the other nations? What does Israel’s doctrine of election mean? How is it part of God’s larger plan?

For application

1. **100:3.** God made everyone, but we belong to him in a particular way. What sacrament brings you into God’s people? What sacraments keep you there?
2. **100:4.** How often do you give thanks for the gift of your faith? What about it are you most grateful for? How does thankfulness lead to praise?

Psalm 101

For understanding

1. **101:2.** How is “the way that is blameless” marked out? What does Deuteronomy require of the king? What does the king seek here?
2. **101:5.** What slanders appear to be meant here? What does the psalm presuppose the speaker has the authority to do?

For application

1. **101:3.** What is “the near occasion of sin”? If you are trying to conquer a besetting sin, such as an attraction to pornography, what would constitute a near occasion of sin for you? In such cases, which is better: to fight the temptation or to run away from it?
2. **101:6.** Suppose you wish to recruit subordinates for a project that involves large amounts of money or sensitive data. For what sort of person would you look? How would you determine whether a candidate meets the standards of integrity needed for this project?

Psalm 102

For understanding

1. **102:3–11.** From what does the Psalmist suffer? What do his symptoms include? What factors make him feel as if God were casting him aside as unwanted?
2. **102:25–27.** Where is hope placed in these verses? How is God, who inhabits eternity, unlike creation? How does the Book of Hebrews apply this passage to Jesus, the first-born Son?

For application

1. **102:8.** Many people only hear the name of Jesus when it is used to curse. How often do you hear it used that way? Have you ever used it that way? How do you respond when you hear the name of Jesus uttered as an expletive?
2. **102:12.** Scripture says that every knee should bow at the name of Jesus (Phil 2:10). What is the significance of that name to you? What external reverence do you practice when you hear that name; e.g., by bowing your head? How might you help others show respect for the name?

Psalm 103

For understanding

1. **103:2.** From what source does gratefulness arise? What does this include?
2. **103:10.** What softens the Lord’s chastisements for sin? What restrains his anger?

For application

1. **103:8.** St. Faustina records in her diary that Jesus gave her three ways of exercising mercy toward others: by deed, by word, and by prayer. Have you ever imitated God’s mercy toward you by doing any of these three for others?
2. **103:10.** How would you answer someone who feels that his guilt is so great the Lord would never forgive him? How would you witness to the Lord’s mercy toward you so as to comfort this person?

Psalm 104

For understanding

1. **104:2.** How do the Psalms often describe the Lord’s face? To what is the work of creation compared? What belief of ancient Israel does this reflect?
2. **104:4.** What ministers does the Lord, who rules the sky, command? How does the Greek LXX read? How does the Greek version, quoted in Heb 1:7, distinguish the divine Son of God from angels?
3. **104:30.** What is “your Spirit” another way of speaking about? What special role does Christian faith recognize that the Holy Spirit plays? What does this show about creation?

4. **104:35.** Why does the Psalmist pray that sinners be consumed? What Hebrew expression does the acclamation “praise the Lord” translate? Of what is the word *yāh* an abbreviated form? How often does the Greek transliteration of this Hebrew expression, *hallēlouia*, appear in Scripture?

For application

1. **104:10–11.** According to the psalm, God provides drinkable water for man and beast alike. What moral responsibility do we have for maintaining our water resources? What moral responsibility do we have to share these resources with those who lack them?
2. **104:14–15.** Our country has been blessed with natural resources that enable us to provide an abundance of food for ourselves. What responsibility do we as a nation have to provide food for other countries? What benefits do we gain by sharing resources with other countries?
3. **104:30.** The liturgy uses this verse to refer to spiritual as well as physical renewal. How might the Holy Spirit renew your relationship with the Trinity? How might that renewal affect your relationships with the Church and her members?

Psalm 105

For understanding

1. **105:15.** Why is the psalm’s unusual way of describing the Patriarchs fitting? Why were some of the prophets of the OT anointed with oil? Who is called a prophet in Gen 20:7?
2. **105:23–36.** What story do these verses summarize? How does the Psalmist abbreviate the Exodus account of the ten plagues? How are Moses and Aaron remembered?
3. **105:45.** What was the purpose behind God’s gift of the Promised Land? What should have been Israel’s grateful response to the divine gifts of liberation and land? What in fact was its response?

For application

1. **105:4.** Why do you need to seek the Lord’s strength? On a spiritual level, how strong are you? How serious is Jesus when he says that, “apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5)?
2. **105:15.** In the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and (if you received it) Holy Orders, you were anointed with sacred chrism. What prophetic role does that anointing give you? How have you fulfilled it?
3. **105:45.** What is God’s purpose in showering gifts upon you? How does his generosity make it easier for you to follow his will for your life?

Psalm 106

For understanding

1. **106:20.** Why is idolatry a perverse act? Why does Paul borrow the language of this verse in Rom 1:23? In doing so, what sin of Israel does he also bring to mind?
2. **106:31.** How is language taken from Gen 15:6 about Abraham applied to Phineas? What did Phineas’ zeal secure for him?
3. **106:47.** What confidence does the history of God saving his people in the past inspire? What does the wording of the appeal suggest about the final form of the psalm?

For application

1. **106:23.** Since God knows everyone’s need, what need do Christians have for intercessory prayer? How does such prayer change the circumstances? How does it change you?
2. **106:33.** The Book of Hebrews warns against allowing a “root of bitterness” to take hold in the Christian community (Heb 12:15). What are some ways it can take hold there? How can it destroy a community? How can a bitter spirit defile prayer?
3. **106:35.** The psalm provides several examples of the dangers of accommodating to the surrounding culture. How does our culture effectively demand that Christians accommodate themselves to it? Why do Christians sometimes want to? What are the dangers of trying to “fit in” with the culture? How can Christians resist the temptation?

Psalm 107

For understanding

1. **107:10.** Which Israelites taken captive are meant here? What does the Psalmist imply about their imprisonment?
2. **107:29.** Since the God of Israel has sovereign command over the seas, what can he do for mariners? Why does Jesus exercise this divine power when he stills the storm on the Sea of Galilee?
3. **107:43.** In what is wisdom found? What is the lesson in this psalm?

For application

1. **107:4–5.** Life is often a search for some kind of spiritual home. How has that search affected you? Where have you searched for fulfillment without finding it? How did you know when you reached what you were searching for?
2. **107:17.** Scripture alludes to the link between sickness and sinful ways; e.g., Jesus' cure of the paralyzed man (Lk 5:20). Have your sins ever affected your health? If the cause of chronic illness is sin, why are medication, diet, and exercise not enough to effect a cure? What is?
3. **107:23–27.** If you have experience in the realms of commerce, finance, or politics, what are some of the ethical and moral dilemmas you have faced in your occupation? What were some of the issues you faced in order to live out your faith in those environments? How do the cardinal virtues come into play?

Psalm 108

For understanding

1. **108:1–13.** What kind of psalm is this? For what does the speaker extol God, and for what does he pray? What are the final verses about?
2. **108:7–9.** In this divine oracle, over which cities and territories does the Lord claim ownership? Because these places belong to God, what is he free to do with them?

For application

1. **108:1–2.** When during the day are you most awake? When are the best and the worst times for you to come to the Lord in prayer? How often do you take advantage of the best times?
2. **108:12.** If the help of man is vain, as the Psalmist says, why seek it? In spiritual matters, how can the help of man assist in obtaining God's provision?

Psalm 109

For understanding

1. **109:6–20.** In these imprecatory words, what does the Psalmist want the Lord to do to his accusers? Instead of taking justice into his own hands and exacting personal revenge, for what does he ask God? To whom do some modern scholars and translators attribute the harsh sayings in these verses?
2. **Topical Essay: Imprecatory Psalms.** What questions do modern readers ask when they run across psalms in the Bible that call down curses on other people? Why must these questions not be sidestepped as unimportant? What kinds of offenses did the Psalmist's enemies heap upon him? Because evil is real and anger is real, what can the imprecatory psalms show us? How do the imprecatory psalms follow the biblical teaching that vengeance belongs to the Lord? How does the Old Testament legal background explain why, for the Psalmist, one who commits wrongs against another should be repaid in kind? Although the imprecatory psalms do not rise to the level of New Testament moral standards, how does Jesus Christ raise the bar of moral expectation above Old Testament moral standards? Finally, how do these considerations mean that we should identify our enemies?
3. **109:24.** Of what is fasting a form? What does Jesus say about fasting, even as he criticizes those who make a show of it?

For application

1. **109:6–19.** According to the essay on "Imprecatory Psalms", how are Christians to identify and deal with their enemies? If the enemies are human, what are we to hope for them as we pray for them? If the enemies are demonic, what form should our prayer take?
2. **109:24.** How often do you fast voluntarily (i.e., not just in response to a prescribed day of fasting)? For what intentions do you fast? In addition to fasting from food, from what activities might you fast (e.g., taking naps, watching television)?

Psalm 110

For understanding

1. **110:1.** Who is the Lord, here? Who is “my lord”? If the psalm goes back to David, then who is the original addressee, and why? What is the importance of a position at the Lord’s right hand? How may the topography of ancient Jerusalem account for the description? To what does making one’s enemies his footstool allude? How does Jesus interpret Ps 110 in reference to the Messiah? Also, at his trial, what does Jesus draw from the psalm? How is the psalm fulfilled in Christ’s ascent to Father’s right hand in heaven?
2. **110:4.** When did David and his royal heirs sponsor Israel’s worship and even act as priests? Nonetheless, what duties were the Davidic kings not permitted to assume? Who was Melchizedek? Why is he remembered in Scripture? How was Davidic rule patterned after this ancient precedent? How often does the Book of Hebrews cite 110:4? Why does the author claim that Christ, the royal priest of the psalm, has a priesthood that is better than the Aaronic priesthood?

For application

1. **110:4.** How often may the Sacrament of Holy Orders be given to the same person? How does it change a man’s relationship with Jesus?

Psalm 111

For understanding

1. **111:5.** To what is the Lord’s provision of food an allusion? According to St. Augustine, who would give a people undeserving of it the food that came down from heaven? What are we to imagine we will receive if he gave so much in this life so that justified sinners could receive the Word made flesh?
2. **111:6.** What is the heritage of the nations that the Lord gave his people? Why was this a display of divine power?

For application

1. **111:7–8.** In the Christian dispensation, what works are to be performed in fulfillment of divine precepts? When, for example, do we perform Sacraments of Initiation? works of mercy?
2. **111:10.** How does fear of the Lord promote wisdom? What are some ways of *practicing* fear of the Lord? What kind of understanding results from that practice?

Psalm 112

For understanding

1. **112:4.** Of what is light rising in the darkness a sign? To what is it also compared in Ps 58:10? Since the Hebrew lacks “the Lord” according to the textual note, who is the possessor of the virtues listed?
2. **112:10.** Why would the wicked man see and be angry? What is the desire of the wicked? How does it mirror the desire of the righteous man?

For application

1. **112:3.** Jesus said that where one’s treasure is, there will his heart be (Lk 12:34). Assuming what is spoken of in this verse is not necessarily physical wealth, what kind of wealth and prosperity will the one who fears the Lord enjoy?
2. **112:7.** If you were to discover that your house burned down while you were away, what would your immediate reaction be? Where would your thoughts first go? How would fear of the Lord help stabilize your emotions and keep your heart firm in trust?

Psalm 113

For understanding

1. **113–18.** What are the Hallel Psalms also called? When were these six psalms sung? What do Rabbinic rulings on the ancient Passover banquet, called a Seder, state about when they are to be sung?

2. **113:6.** In the cosmic poetry of the Bible, where is God enthroned? What position does the Lord have in relation to the highest of heights?
3. **113:7–9.** How do these verses echo the Song of Hannah? When the Lord acts to reverse fortunes, what burdens does he remove?

For application

1. **113:1–3.** How should praise characterize your practice of prayer? How should it come to you spontaneously from sunrise to sunset (i.e., throughout the day)?
2. **113:7.** The note for vv. 7–9 speaks of the Lord removing burdens. In your relationship with the Lord, what burdens has he removed from your shoulders? How does praise of the Lord contribute to having these burdens removed?

Psalm 114

For understanding

1. **114:2.** What are Judah and Israel? What constitutes the Lord's sanctuary?
2. **114:4.** Which mountains are referred to here? What reference do some see to Mt. Sinai? What would cause rams to "skip"?

For application

1. **114:1.** Conversion entails leaving some environments and entering another. If you have experienced such a conversion, what relationships, habits, places, or other environments did you leave, and what did you enter? What led to these decisions? What were some of the difficulties involved in this process, and what were some of the rewards?
2. **114:7.** How did you first discover the presence of the Lord in your life? How earth-shattering an experience was it? Or, if it was not dramatic and overpowering, how did you recognize it as a presence?

Psalm 115

For understanding

1. **115:2.** What may the mocking words of enemies indicate? Or, in view of what follows, what else may they suggest?
2. **115:4–8.** How are idols mocked in these verses? Lacking even the most basic abilities, what power do they have? What happens to those who worship blind and deaf images?
3. **115:11.** Who are "you who fear the LORD"? In NT times, what were Gentiles who attended synagogue services known as? What is fear of the Lord?

For application

1. **115:1.** What are some of your most significant accomplishments? To what extent do you claim credit for them because of your skill, intelligence, or perseverance? What glory do you give God for them?
2. **115:16.** If God has given the earth to the sons of men, what have we done with it? How has our culture removed the sense of the sacred from our view of creation, and how might recovering our fear of the Lord benefit creation?

Psalm 116

For understanding

1. **116:10.** Despite being sorely tested, how did the Psalmist respond? In the Greek LXX, how is the passage translated? What does Paul cite the Greek version in 2 Cor 4:13 to describe? By what is it not destroyed, and what does it endure?
2. **116:13.** What probably was the "chalice of salvation"? What is another viewpoint? How has this expression been taken into the Church's liturgy?

For application

1. **116:6.** In modern English, being called simple is an insult, but in traditional spirituality simplicity is a virtue. Who are the simple? To whom did Jesus compare them? Spiritually, what are the advantages of being simple?
2. **116:15.** Read the note for this verse. In one respect, the death of saints is precious because it costs God their service on this earth. Of what does the death of saints deprive human society? What does it gain for them?

Psalm 117

For understanding

1. **117:1.** How are all the nations represented? What does Paul cite this verse in Rom 15:11 to indicate?

For application

1. **117:2.** How is the steadfast love of the Lord shown to people who do not know him? Since Jesus wants disciples of all nations, how would his steadfast love be shown more vividly if they did know him?

Psalm 118

For understanding

1. **118:19.** For what is this verse a request? Who probably recited it, and when?
2. **118:20.** As a response to the request in the previous verse, who perhaps recited it? On what condition is entrance granted?
3. **118:22.** At what does this proverbial saying marvel? Though the identity of the rejected stone is uncertain, who might it represent? What is a cornerstone? As part of the foundation, as what did it likely serve? How does Jesus see this passage fulfilled? How do Peter and Paul likewise identify Jesus as the rejected stone?

For application

1. **118:10–12.** Why do Christians pray against evil or for some favor “in Jesus’ name”? Why the explicit use of that name? What power does it have?
2. **118:24.** How might every day be the day that the Lord makes for rejoicing? In the context of the psalm, rejoicing occurs because the Lord builds his house on what man rejects. Has he ever turned failure or rejection in your life into victory? If so, how have you thanked him?

Psalm 119

For understanding

1. **119:2.** For what is the word “testimonies” used in the psalm? What other words mean the same thing? What discovery becomes part of the joy of serving the Lord? How is obedience to the Torah presented?
2. **119:81.** What does the Psalmist hope that his faithfulness to the Torah will bring him? What does Jesus describe as a path to eternal salvation?
3. **119:89–90.** What does the word of the Lord expressed in divine revelation support? Indeed, what will the word of the Lord outlast?

For application

1. **119:9.** Read the note for this verse. How might this psalm be appropriately called the song of a young man? What does it advise him to follow?
2. **119:36.** To what does the human heart naturally incline? Why is it so hard for one to change that inclination by his own willpower? In asking the Lord to incline your heart to his testimonies, for what are you really asking?
3. **119:71.** How can affliction be good for the soul? What can one learn from it? How can one use it for others’ benefit?
4. **119:105.** What are some of the ways the Scriptures provide practical moral guidance? What, for example, do you learn from the life of David about the consequences of sin? What insight do you get from some of your favorite proverbs or sayings of Jesus?

Psalm 120

For understanding

1. **120–34.** What superscription do these fifteen psalms have? Whose names are attached to four of them? When do some think these psalms were sung? Where do others, on the basis of ancient testimony, envision them sung by Levites? How do the Greek LXX and Latin Vulgate both render the superscription?

2. **120:3.** Who is the giver in this verse? What sort of oath formula is this? What figure of speech is “you deceitful tongue”?
3. **120:5.** Where is Meshech? Where is Kedar?

For application

1. **120:2.** The *Catechism* calls lying “the most direct offense against the truth” (CCC 2483). How does lying deform a person’s character? How do you measure the seriousness of a lie (cf. CCC 2484)?
2. **120:3.** What harm do lies do to personal relationships? How is lying destructive of society?

Psalm 121

For understanding

1. **121:1.** Why does the Psalmist lift his eyes to the hills? At different times in history, with what was the landscape of Israel dotted? What does the Psalmist know about such places? Instead, where is his only true source of help?
2. **121:6.** How was the scorching sun harmful to travelers? By what did ancient peoples believe that epilepsy was caused? Alternatively, what could the point be about God’s protection?

For application

1. **121:2.** When you meet a situation where you need help (e.g., paying bills or repairing plumbing), where do you look first for it? Even in minor matters, why is it a good idea to turn to the Lord first instead of last?
2. **121:8.** How often do you pray before setting out on a journey? What form does your prayer take (e.g., a quick prayer behind the wheel, a Rosary)? If the journey makes you anxious, how might prayer during it bring peace?

Psalm 122

For understanding

1. **122:4.** Which are the tribes referred to here? With what does traveling to Jerusalem end? In Deut 16:16, what did the law require of Israelite men? How would they give thanks?
2. **122:5.** As the seat of the Davidic monarchy, for what was Jerusalem responsible? As what did the king himself sometimes serve? What does the Mosaic law call for, and what is unclear about it?

For application

1. **122:1.** What is the purpose of a pilgrimage? Have you ever made a religious pilgrimage, whether the destination was near or far away? If so, what was your motive for going? What satisfaction did you feel when you arrived at the site? When the pilgrimage ended, how did you evaluate the benefits of going there?
2. **122:6–9.** Pilgrimage sites often face threats of discord and violence. For whose sake would you pray for peace there? If for yourself, for what sort of peace would you be looking?

Psalm 123

For understanding

1. **123:1–4.** In this lament psalm, in whose name is the Psalmist offering a prayer of petition and trustful reliance upon God, and why? Who are the unnamed culprits?
2. **123:1.** What theme does this verse introduce? Where is the Lord’s eternal throne located? What does looking upward for help imply?

For application

1. **123:2.** Servants in a royal household must always be attentive to the slightest motion from the monarch that indicates a desire for service. What attention do you pay to the slightest movement of the Lord in your soul? How do you detect these movements? How do you respond to them?

Psalm 124

For understanding

1. **124:1.** What belief about God is the Psalmist expressing? What is he inviting the covenant people to do? What may these words have called forth from the congregation?
2. **124:8.** What is Israel's only hope in the face of adversaries? By what story does Scripture illustrate this? What does the expression "who made heaven and earth" say about God?

For application

1. **124:1.** When Christians have a legitimate disagreement, whose side is God on? Rather than trying to settle God's allegiance to one side or the other, who should be taking sides with whom?
2. **124:7.** Have you ever had a narrow escape from some danger? If so, to whom did you give credit for the escape? What thanks for it did you give the Lord?

Psalm 125

For understanding

1. **125:1.** What does firm reliance on the Lord in all circumstances include? With what is Mt. Zion crowned? What belief is expressed by the statement that Zion cannot be moved?
2. **125:3.** Who bears the scepter of wickedness? What kind of reign could foreign occupation inaugurate? What is the land allotted to the righteous? Who are the righteous?

For application

1. **125:1.** Read the note for this verse. How firm is your trust that God will enforce the moral order that he established, which is under attack from all sides? How firm is your own commitment to that moral order? How ready are you to defend it?
2. **125:5.** What is apostasy, as distinct from heresy or schism (cf. CCC 2089)? If you have children or relatives who have turned aside from the faith, how do you keep the doors of communication open to them? What do you owe them as a faithful Christian yourself?

Psalm 126

For understanding

1. **126:2.** What did the nations reason that Israel's God must be responsible for?
2. **126:4.** What fortunes does the Psalmist want restored in this case? To what are the watercourses referred? What may the image represent? Where is the Negeb?

For application

1. **126:1–3.** Have you or your family ever experienced a stroke of good fortune, especially one that helped you recover from a disaster? If so, what was the joy you felt from that recovery? How did you share it with others? What thanks did you give the Lord for it?
2. **126:6.** What makes the beginning of a project the most difficult part of it? If the project has been tedious or difficult, how do you celebrate when it is finished?

Psalm 127

For understanding

1. **127:1.** What house is probably referred to here? What can the Hebrew *bayit* also mean? Why is human effort alone vain? When is trust in human resources misplaced? According to St. Augustine, who is the true peacemaker, the true Solomon, the true builder? Although many others labor as well, how may their labors be lost? Who builds without, and who builds within?

2. **127:3.** Who can bestow property and possessions on their descendants, and who can bestow the gift of children? According to Catholic teaching, as the supreme gift of marriage, by whom should children be formed in faith and virtue first of all? What does the Church think of large families? What fruit can childless couples bear?

For application

1. **127:1.** What principle can you glean from this verse on how to make decisions for the future? How will it help in making plans?
2. **127:3–5.** How do these verses contrast with the attitudes toward children and family size prominent in our culture? Why does the Catholic Church require married couples to be open to having children? Why does she forbid efforts to impede conception artificially?

Psalm 128

For understanding

1. **128:1–6.** What does this wisdom psalm declare that fear of the Lord brings? How are these manifested? Beyond families that flourish, for what does the Psalmist pray?
2. **128:2.** What does the language of this verse amount to saying?

For application

1. **128:3.** How would you describe modern attitudes toward women's fertility? Although many women wish to have children, they do not necessarily want to bear many. Why not? According to the *Catechism*, what should women do who find that they cannot bear children of their own (cf. CCC 2379)?

Psalm 129

For understanding

1. **129:1.** On whose behalf does the Psalmist speak in the first person? To what is "my youth" a reference? According to St. Robert Bellarmine, to what does this psalm apply? How long has the Church endured persecution?
2. **129:5.** Who are those who hate Zion? In the Bible, who are some of those who fit this description? What does the Psalmist's prayer for punishment implore God to do?

For application

1. **129:1–2.** How personally do you take physical or ideological attacks on the Church? How confident are you that the Church will be able to withstand these attacks? Whether you are clergy, religious, or laity, how involved do you get in defending the Church?

Psalm 130

For understanding

1. **130:3.** Why is all confidence in one's goodness lost when a person contemplates standing before the divine Judge? What is the only thing the Psalmist can do?
2. **130:8.** To what does the Hebrew *pādāh* refer? What is the premier example in the OT? What hope did it inspire?

For application

1. **130:3.** How worried are you that the Lord keeps track of your sins? How confident are you that your worst sins are actually forgiven?
2. **130:6.** The Lord seems to be silent, even when we most desperately want to hear from him. What does waiting for the Lord in such circumstances mean to you? How intently do you listen for his voice?

Psalm 131

For understanding

1. **131:1.** What place do expressions of self-assertion have in a relationship with God? What constitutes presumption and a sign of "forgetting one's place"?

2. **131:2.** How does the Psalmist picture himself? While Scripture reveals that God is a divine Father, what other characteristics does it ascribe to him? Why is God neither male nor female? Nevertheless, how do the perfections of God become visible to man? Why does Jesus likewise require disciples to become “like children”?

For application

1. **131:1.** Does the Psalmist mean that we should not pursue God? If not, what about pursuing the heights of holiness? Why is the goal of becoming a saint not too great a goal for you?
2. **131:2.** Thoughts and distractions often seem to make prayer impossible. How do you silence the “noise” in your mind and imagination?

Psalm 132

For understanding

1. **132:5.** For what “place” was David looking? How was the location revealed to him? Who is “the Mighty One of Jacob”?
2. **132:8.** What does the expression “Arise, O Lord” recall? What is the Lord’s resting place? Originally, to what did this refer? Eventually, where did the Lord locate it?

For application

1. **132:8.** For you, where is the Lord’s “resting place”? How do you prepare it?
2. **132:12.** If you are a parent, what efforts have you made to teach your children to keep their baptismal covenant? How have they been keeping it? If they depart from it when they are older, do you have a responsibility to bring them back?

Psalm 133

For understanding

1. **133:1.** Whom does the title “brothers” include? What does the Psalmist probably envision? What does “dwelling in unity” mean? For what do some think the Psalmist hopes out loud? How were the tribes divided? When does Jesus pray for the blessing of unity upon the Church?
2. **133:3.** When is the refreshing and invigorating quality of dew especially welcome? Where is Hermon? How was Zion a source of countless blessings in Israel’s history? Of what is the NT view of the earthly city of Zion a sign?

For application

1. **133:1.** How can the typical parish become a community where people consciously relate to each other as brothers and sisters? Why is such a visible brotherhood important for the rest of society?

Psalm 134

For understanding

1. **134:1.** What is the act of blessing? Who are the “servants of the Lord” here?
2. **134:3.** By whom was the benediction similar to Num 6:24–26 probably recited? What belief of Israel did blessing from Zion reflect?

For application

1. **134:1–2.** If you have bouts of insomnia, what do you do while awake? Do you pray at such times? If so, what forms does your prayer take? Would you ever consider Eucharistic adoration in the pre-dawn hours if your parish offered it?

Psalm 135

For understanding

1. **135:5.** What claim is made often in the Psalms about the Lord in comparison to other gods? What is not entirely clear about ancient Israel’s acceptance of the existence of other gods? What do other passages of Scripture assert about idolatrous worship?

2. **135:19–21.** All in all, who are summoned to praise and thank the God whose presence resides in the Temple?

For application

1. **135:6.** What do you believe about the existence of miracles? What is their purpose? Have you ever prayed for a miracle, and if so, how was the prayer answered?
2. **135:15–18.** In what ways are those who manufacture idols like the idols they make? What idols do moderns make for themselves, and how do these idols reflect the character of their creators?

Psalm 136

For understanding

1. **136:1–26.** What does this litany of the Lord’s marvelous works in the past reveal? What does the recital celebrate? How was its dominant theme, repeated 26 times, probably sung? In the Talmud, what is Ps 136 known as, and on what Jewish feasts is it sung today?
2. **136:1.** How do words of thanks frame the psalm? What does the word “for”, which appears throughout the psalm, introduce? What does the Hebrew *hesed* designate? For whom is God’s goodness real?

For application

1. **136:1ff.** What is a litany? With what litanies are you most familiar? What is the spiritual value in repeating the same phrases over and over again? For example, in the Litany of the Sacred Heart, how does repetition of Jesus’ titles enhance your view of him?

Psalm 137

For understanding

1. **137:1.** What are the “waters of Babylon”? What does the word “there” seem to imply about the Psalmist’s location? What is he describing, and from where may he be writing? For what is he nostalgic?
2. **137:9.** What was one of the extreme cruelties of ancient warfare? What does the Psalmist, whose people suffered such horrors at that hands of the Babylonians, hope will happen to the Babylonians? What does the Torah’s *lex talionis* state? What does St. Augustine say that one should do with evil desires and lusts before they become habits?

For application

1. **137:9.** Review the note for this verse. Given St. Augustine’s advice on how to pray this verse, what evil desires, lusts, and other sinful inclinations would you like to see dashed against the rock? How might his advice apply to prayers against the influence of the devil?

Psalm 138

For understanding

1. **138:1.** What kind of sacrifice may the opening words of the psalm have accompanied? Though the Greek LXX and the Latin Vulgate have “angels”, what does the Hebrew have? Before what images is the Psalmist standing as he prays? What reference to the Lord’s greatness do others see here?
2. **138:2.** What is an appropriate expression of homage before a king? What is the normal direction of prayer, and why? What are two of the Lord’s most outstanding attributes? Where were they revealed?

For application

1. **138:2.** Bodily positions and gestures can enhance the intensity of prayer. How does prostration enhance prayer? Why pray facing in a certain direction, such as toward the east? If you have done either of these, what was your intention, and what effect did it have? By contrast, what is your least favorite position at prayer, and why?
2. **138:8.** What does the *Catechism* say in general about why the Lord created you? What do you know about his more specific purpose for your life, for example, for your vocation or a specific mission? If this is not clear to you, what steps can you take to discern it?

Psalm 139

For understanding

1. **139:13.** How does the Lord know each of us? In this poetic image of gestation, how does the Lord work? According to Catholic teaching, how is God intimately involved in the generation of every human life? Thus, when does the right to life begin, and when does it end?
2. **139:19–22.** Toward whom is this prayer for divine judgment directed? Of what is the Psalmist confident? What can no sinner hope to evade?
3. **139:22.** How does the Psalmist identify God’s enemies? At whom is his righteous anger directed? How does Jesus raise the bar of moral expectation in the NT?

For application

1. **139:6.** What does the Lord know about you that you do not already know? How does he reveal yourself to you?
2. **139:13–16.** The Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* described abortion as an unspeakable crime (GS 51). How do these verses underscore the evil of abortion? What would be the intent behind referring them to a woman considering abortion? How might they give direction to the prayers of Christians opposing abortion?
3. **139:23.** Why does the Psalmist want the Lord to search him and know his thoughts? What might be the advantage of asking the Lord to do the same for you? When would you prefer that his judgment of you should occur, now or after death?

Psalm 140

For understanding

1. **140:2–3.** Where does wickedness often begin, and how does it enter the world?
2. **140:3.** What does it mean to say that the tongue is sharp? What is Paul trying to show by quoting the Greek version of this line in Rom 3:13c? What is his implication?
3. **140:12.** With what certainty does the Psalmist know what the Lord does? Who are the afflicted and the needy?

For application

1. **140:6.** How often do you remind yourself that the Lord is your God? While it is easy to remind yourself of his lordship while at prayer, when is it harder to do that? For example, how do you acknowledge his sovereignty over you when you are denied a benefit you crave?

Psalm 141

For understanding

1. **141:2.** From where did the fragrant billows of smoke rise every morning and evening in the Temple? What did it symbolize? What did the traditional posture of lifting of hands in prayer perhaps indicate? What was the evening sacrifice? Of what did it consist? Who else would pray at this time?
2. **141:5.** What does the Psalmist welcome? Though the experience may be humbling, how do its benefits outweigh its drawbacks?

For application

1. **141:2.** How do the “smells and bells” of Catholic liturgy assist in prayer? How do they enhance the solemnity of prayer?
2. **141:5.** Fraternal correction is often needed within the Christian community (Mt 18:15ff.), but how often do you see it given? For example, what would happen in your parish if a parishioner corrected a couple who were living together outside of marriage? Ideally, what should relationships in the community be like for correction to be welcomed where needed?

Psalm 142

For understanding

1. **142:5.** For whom is the Lord a fortress of protection? What may the words “my portion” suggest about the Psalmist?

2. **142:7.** What is the uncertainty about how the Psalmist is speaking, literally or metaphorically? How does he want to give thanks? Who are the righteous? What is thus the movement of the psalm?

For application

1. **142:3.** What is a “faint spirit”? How does God’s knowledge of your way help when your spirit is faint?
2. **142:5.** What does it mean for the Lord to be your “portion” in life? Whom do you have in heaven that is higher than he, and who on earth can be your portion in life?

Psalm 143

For understanding

1. **143:2.** What does this verse amount to saying? How does the Greek LXX read? What does Paul adopt the wording of this verse in Rom 3:20 and Gal 2:16 to deny? What does he insist the Mosaic Law brings?
2. **143:10.** What does the Psalmist perceive? How does the Spirit of the Lord renew the face of the earth? What do Jesus and the apostles likewise affirm that the Spirit’s mission is?

For application

1. **143:3.** The devil never tires of trying to win us away from the Lord, and his temptations can seem overwhelming. How do you resist them? If temptations are truly severe and chronic, how might engaging fellow Christians in prayer for deliverance help?
2. **143:8.** Jesus says that one who seeks finds, and one who knocks has the door opened to him (Mt 7:7–8). What do these sayings imply about prayer for direction?

Psalm 144

For understanding

1. **144:5.** What does this verse recall? According to St. Leo the Great, what was the purpose of this prayer?
2. **144:8.** To what does the “right hand of falsehood” refer? How was testimony given under oath?

For application

1. **144:1.** How has the Lord prepared you for spiritual warfare? In your experience, in what does spiritual warfare consist? What battles have you had to fight?
2. **144:8.** Perjury is not only a sin against God, but a crime against the human community. What makes it so heinous? Why is it more serious than ordinary lying?

Psalm 145

For understanding

1. **Word Study: Compassion (145:9).** What does the Hebrew word *rahamim* mean? For what does it function abstractly as a word? What rendering have some suggested for it? On a human level, what can it denote? How can compassion also be manifest? Whose compassion is more significant in Scripture? Out of the stores of his mercy, what does the Lord offer his people? What is the basis of a sinful people’s restored relationship with the Lord? What revelation is one of the Bible’s most heartening truths?
2. **145:11.** How far does the Lord’s kingdom extend? What did he *not* have to do to acquire it? In the history of Israel, through whom did the Lord administer his rule? In the New Covenant, through whom does he administer it?

For application

1. **145:8.** How quickly do you become angry, and how long does it take you to calm down? How is the Lord’s anger unlike your own? How can his anger be considered a manifestation of his love?
2. **145:14.** When you feel discouraged or depressed because you have sinned yet once again, how does the Lord raise you up? What does it mean to say that the Lord judges you less harshly than you judge yourself?

Psalm 146

For understanding

1. **146:50.** Why are these psalms called the Hallelujah Psalms? Of what is the word *yāh* an abbreviated form? How often does the Greek transliteration of this Hebrew expression, *hallelouia*, appear, and where? As what are these concluding five songs also known?
2. **146:6.** Since God is the Maker of all things, how available is his help? Which commandment does the reference to three realms of creation echo? In whose prayer does it appear again?

For application

1. **146:1–2.** What is the value of beginning each period of prayer with expressions of praise of God? Since God does not benefit from your praise, what benefit is there in it?
2. **146:3–4.** According to the Psalmist, why should one not place trust in princes? In a political system where administrations trade off from one party to another, how reliable are the promises each makes? When Christians work to amend laws or promote good, where should their trust be placed?

Psalm 147

For understanding

1. **147:2.** When was the city of Jerusalem rebuilt from ruins? How did this take place? From where did the outcasts come?
2. **147:3.** What does the Lord do for the hearts of those wounded by suffering? What does he look on as an acceptable sacrifice that leads to forgiveness?

For application

1. **147:5.** The verse says that the Lord's understanding is "beyond measure". What can we mortals know of God's understanding? What does the Lord want us to know about himself?
2. **147:10–11.** With what strength or skill or understanding can you impress God? During Jesus' ministry, what seemed to frustrate him the most? What seemed to impress him?

Psalm 148

For understanding

1. **148:1–14.** In this psalm of praise, what is all creation called to do? How does the summons begin, and how does it work its way down? What, in particular, is Israel's mission as a people? For what song in Scripture is Ps 148 the primary inspiration?
2. **148:7.** What are the sea monsters? To which reptiles can the Hebrew *tannînim* refer specifically?
3. **148:8.** How do non-living and non-rational creatures glorify God?

For application

1. **148:1–6.** If you live in an area with little light interference at night, how many stars can you see? If you can contemplate them, what thoughts do they bring to mind? How do they inspire you to prayers of praise?
2. **148:11–12.** Many human cultures, both primitive and advanced, do not know the true God, yet this psalm invites them to praise him. How would they do this? How is the praise of "all his saints" different from that of those who are not members of that group? How is it the same?

Psalm 149

For understanding

1. **149:6–9.** How does the community stand ready to execute God's sentence on wicked nations? On what is this prospect patterned? Also, from what song may executing God's vengeance with swords be an echo?
2. **149:9.** To what does "the judgment written" refer? What do some scholars think is meant?

Psalms

For application

1. **149:6.** The Book of Hebrews compares Scripture to a two-edged sword (e.g., Heb 4:12). What is the similarity? How does Scripture exact the Lord's vengeance on the nations? How does its sharpness affect you?

Psalm 150

For understanding

1. **150:1.** In how many verses of this psalm does the call to praise appear? Of what is the earthly Temple in Jerusalem an image? What is the firmament?

For application

1. **150:1.** In any church building, where should the focus of the worshiper's attention be directed? Which architectural styles seem to do that most effectively?
2. **150:3–5.** How does the use of musical instruments aid or augment worship? Which instruments are considered most appropriate for Catholic liturgical worship?