

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Church of the ages has counted Psalm 38 among the seven Penitential Psalms. In it we hear the Psalmist's cry for mercy. David is aware of his sins. He struggles mightily with affliction. He is aware of the justice of God. So he prays "O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure!" These were the first Words of our Mass today.

By praying the Introit we have made David's prayer our prayer, his Penitential Scripture our Lenten confession and hope. David feels the crushing condemnation of the Law of God, the Holy expression of God's will for you, that Law which you, like David, have broken. Repentance has two parts: contrition and faith. So the anointed King of Israel confesses before God "...I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin."

Let his Words be your words this violet season, as you heartily know contrition, true sorrow before God for your sins. Hear the Words inspired of the Holy Spirit, Words you too can pray as a sinner condemned by the Law of God:

"For Your arrows pierce me deeply, and Your hand presses me down. There is no soundness in my flesh Because of Your anger, nor any health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long."

Would that each of us be as honest as David before God. Sin is no plaything. It is not something you can cover over or hide. Other men may not be able to see it in you. But you can't hide it from God. Do as the Psalmist: confess your sins.

Confess the burden of your sins, your sickness of soul because of your sins. Pray back to God the very Words He has given you in this Penitential Psalm. But do not do so in despair. For One has suffered for you. One has endured God's wrath and hot displeasure in your place.

That One is the center of Psalm 38. The Christology of the Psalm is evident to faith. Our Lord declared of the Old Testament Scriptures "These are they which testify to Me." So in Psalm 38 we hear of the persecution of the Messiah, as satan and his footsoldiers wage war against the Holy One, the Savior, the True Anointed One:

"...My enemies are vigorous, and they are strong; And those who hate me wrongfully have multiplied. Those also who render evil for good, they are my adversaries, because I follow what is good. Those also who seek my life lay snares for me; Those who seek my hurt speak of destruction, and plan deception all the day long."

So, in mercy, the Lord taught the Twelve: "...the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify."

On the night that His Passion began, the Supper Instituted, the New Testament given in the Blood He was about to shed, the Christ speaks through the Psalmist as Gethesemane is in view: "For I am ready to fall, And my sorrow is continually before me."

And Consider God the Son on the cross. Who but Christ scourged and crucified could speak these Words? "...My sighing is not hidden from You. My heart pants, my strength fails me; As for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me. My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, And my relatives stand afar off. For my loins are full of inflammation, And there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart."

He endured trial, torture and cross to pay the price for your sins. His heart-felt sorrow was pure, holy, faithful. And there He rendered His precious life, that the penalty of your sins be visited upon Him. Crucified and dead, He was buried. It is He alone that gave His life for you.

As you meditate on the sufferings of our Lord, as you remember the darkness and silence of that sealed stone tomb, consider these Words of Psalm 38: "But I, like a deaf man, do not hear; And I am like a mute who does not open his mouth. Thus I am like a man who does not hear, And in whose mouth is no response." The God of Life died.

But He is not dead. He gave His life for you. And for you, He took up His life again, just as He had promised the Twelve: "...and on the third day He will rise again." He keeps His promises, even from the other side of the tomb. So the Psalmist titles Psalm 38 with these Words of hope: "To bring to remembrance." He invokes the Promise of God. He prays God remember His Promise, and render the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection to him, and to you. God is faithful. God indeed remembers.

So you, with David, may pray "Lord, all my desire is before You; for in You, O LORD, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God." God hears your prayer for mercy. And He has answered your prayer in Christ, for in Him your sins, though many, are forgiven. He is the desire of faith, He is the Lord in Whom you hope. So you too may pray "Do not forsake me, O LORD; O my God, be not far from me!" For God has not forsaken you. He is God with you.

He is God with you in this Lententide, this time of prayer and fasting, this time of repentance, this time of hope. He is God with you because you are Baptized, and His Spirit fills you. He is God with you because His Absolution is spoken over you. He is God with you as the Crucified and Risen Christ is placed into your mouth and poured across your lips. As you eat and drink Christ, you remember and proclaim His death until He comes. And as you have prayed, so has He remembered. He freely gives you forgiveness and life.

In love, in mercy, He does not rebuke you, rather He blesses you. He does not chasten you, for the hot displeasure of the Father was visited upon His Son. What is left for you is joy and peace, blessing and His Holy Gifts. So in faith, without doubting, you may pray with confidence "Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!"

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