**Praying with the Psalms in times of pandemic**

In these extraordinary days for the human family worldwide, we know well that if one person suffers, all people suffer together with them *[cf: 1 Corinthians 12:26].*

There are many burdens weighing upon us: the mourning of so many lives ended by this pandemic, especially those blessed with mature years; the frustration of not being to honour our dead as a community as we would have wished; patience tried in long queues, being in isolation, not being able to hug loved ones, not being able to worship together, enjoy each other’s company and so many other ways.

In these situations, when we are full of deep emotions, we can find them expressed time and again for us in the psalms. These beautiful prayers from the Old Testament were very familiar to Jesus. On the cross when he prayed: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” and “Into your hands I commend my spirit”, Christ was quoting lines from the psalms.

Here below are some lines from the psalms which we might pray in an open hearted way on behalf of all those making up the suffering Body of Christ throughout the whole world. We pray them for the sick and the dying, for those accompanying them and as a reminder to us that we are all in God’s hands, now and into the life of eternity. Pray them slowly. Perhaps they could be used as part of a Holy Hour.

**Lines from Psalm 31**In you, O Lord, I take refuge.
Be a rock of refuge for me,
a mighty stronghold to save me.
For your name’s sake, lead me and guide me.

Into your hands I commend my spirit.
It is you who will redeem me, Lord.

Let me be glad and rejoice in your love,
You who have seen my affliction
and taken heed of my soul’s distress,

Have mercy on me, O Lord.
Tears have wasted my eyes,
my throat and my heart.

Affliction has broken down my strength
I am like a dead man, forgotten,
like a thing thrown away.

But as for me, I trust in you, Lord;
I say: “You are my God.”
My life is in your hands, deliver me.
Let your face shine on your servant.
Save me in your love.

How great is the goodness, Lord,
that you show to those who trust you.
You hide them in the shelter of your presence
you keep them safe within your tent.
Blessed be the Lord who has shown me
the wonders of his love.

Be strong, let your heart take courage,
all who hope in the Lord.

**From Psalm 17(16)**
Lord, pay heed to my cry.
I am here and I call, you will hear me, O God.
Turn your ear to me; hear my words.
Display your great love, you whose right hand saves
Guard me as the apple of your eye.
Hide me in the shadow of your wings
As for me, in my justice I shall see your face
and be filled, when I awake, with the sight of your glory.

 **From Psalm 18(17)***[\*when we pray to be saved from our foes, we can understand this to be anything which is the enemy to the fullness of life at work in us as desired by the Lord, especially sin and death].*

I love you, Lord, my strength,
my rock, my fortress, my saviour.
My God is the rock where I take refuge;
my shield, my mighty help, my stronghold.
The Lord is worthy of all praise,
when I call I am saved from my foes\*.

The waves of death rose about me;
the torrents of destruction assailed me;
the snares of the grave entangled me;
the traps of death confronted me.

In my anguish I called to the Lord;
I cried to God for help.
From his temple he heard my voice;
my cry came to his ears.

You, O Lord, are my lamp,
my God who lightens my darkness.
With you I can break through any barrier,
with my God I can scale any wall.

**From Psalm 22(21)**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
You are far from my plea and the cry of my distress.
O my God, I call by day and you give no reply;
I call by night and I find no peace.

Yet you, O God, are holy,
In you our fathers put their trust;
they trusted and you set them free.

Yes, it was you who took me from the womb,
entrusted me to my mother's breast.
To you I was committed from my birth,
from my mother's womb you have been my God.
Do not leave me alone in my distress;
Come close, there is none else to help.

Like water I am poured out,
disjointed are all my bones.
My heart has become like wax,
it is melted within my breast.

O Lord, do not leave me alone,
my strength, make haste to help me!

**From Psalm 25(24)**To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
I trust you, let me not be disappointed;
do not let my enemies triumph.

In you I hope all day long
because of your goodness, O Lord.
Remember your mercy, Lord,
and the love you have shown from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth.
In your love remember me.

My eyes are always on the Lord;
for he rescues my feet from the snare.
Turn to me and have mercy
for I am lonely and poor.

Relieve the anguish of my heart
and set me free from my distress.

Preserve my life and rescue me.
Do not disappoint me, you are my refuge.

**From Psalm 27(26)**
The Lord is my light and my help;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
before whom shall I shrink?

O Lord, hear my voice when I call;
have mercy and answer.
Of you my heart has spoken:
“Seek God’s face.”

It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;
hide not your face.
Dismiss not your servant in anger;
you have been my help.

Do not abandon or forsake me,
O God my help!

I am sure I shall see the Lord’s goodness
in the land of the living.
Hope in God, hold firm and take heart.
Hope in the Lord!

**From Psalm 28(27)**To you, O Lord, I call,
my rock, hear me.
If you do not heed I shall become
like those in the grave.

Hear the voice of my pleading
as I call for help,
as I lift up my hands in prayer
to your holy place.

Blessed be Lord for he has heard
my cry, my appeal.
The Lord is my strength and my shield;
in him my heart trusts.
I was helped, my heart rejoices
and I praise him with my song.

The Lord is the strength of his people,
a fortress where his anointed find salvation.
Save your people; bless Israel your heritage.
Be their shepherd and carry them for ever.

**Psalm 30(29)**I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me
and have not let my enemies rejoice over me.

O Lord, I cried to you for help
and you, my God, have healed me.
O Lord, you have raised my soul from the dead,
restored me to life from those who sink into the grave.

Sing psalms to the Lord, you who love him,
give thanks to his holy name.
God’s anger lasts a moment; his favour all through life.
At night there are tears, but joy comes with dawn.

I said to myself in my good fortune:
"Nothing will ever disturb me."
Your favour had set me on a mountain fastness,
then you hid your face and I was put to confusion.

To you, Lord, I cried,
to my God I made appeal:
"What profit would my death be, my going to the grave?
Can dust give you praise or proclaim your truth?

The Lord listened and had pity.
The Lord came to my help.
For me you have changed my mourning into dancing,
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.
So my soul sings psalms to you unceasingly.
O Lord my God, I will thank you for ever.

**From Psalm 33 (32)**The Lord looks on those who revere him,
on those who hope in his love,
to rescue their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul is waiting for the Lord.
The Lord is our help and our shield.
In him do our hearts find joy.
We trust in his holy name.

May your love be upon us, O Lord,
as we place all our hope in you.

**Psalm 34(33)**
I will bless the Lord at all times,
God’s praise always on my lips;
in the Lord my soul shall make its boast.
The humble shall hear and be glad.

Glorify the Lord with me.
Together let us praise his name.
I sought the Lord and he answered me;
from all my terrors he set me free.

Look towards him and be radiant;
let your faces not be abashed.
This poor one called, the Lord heard him
and rescued him from all his distress.

The angel of the Lord is encamped
around those who revere him, to rescue them.
Taste and see that the Lord is good.
They are happy who seek refuge in him.

They call and the Lord hears
and rescues them in all their distress.
The Lord is close to the broken-hearted;
those whose spirit is crushed he will save.

**From Psalm 38(37)**
O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger;
do not punish me, Lord, in your rage.

I am bowed and brought to my knees.
I go mourning all the day long.
All my frame burns with fever;
all my body is sick.
Spent and utterly crushed,
I cry aloud in anguish of heart.

O Lord, you know all my longing:
my groans are not hidden from you.
My heart throbs, my strength is spent;
the very light has gone from my eyes.

My friends avoid me like a leper;
those closest to me stand afar off.

I count on you, O Lord:
it is you, Lord God, who will answer.

O Lord, do not forsake me!
My God, do not stay afar off!
Make haste and come to my help,
O Lord, my God, my saviour!

**Psalm 40(39)**
I waited, I waited for the Lord
and he stooped down to me;
he heard my cry.

He drew me from the deadly pit,
from the miry clay.
He set my feet upon a rock
and made my footsteps firm.

O Lord, you will not withhold
your compassion from me.
Your merciful love and your truth
will always guard me.

O Lord, come to my rescue;
Lord, come to my aid.

O let there be rejoicing and gladness
for all who seek you.
Let them ever say: "The Lord is great",
who love your saving help.

As for me, wretched and poor,
the Lord thinks of me.
You are my rescuer, my help,
O God, do not delay.