



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday, 1st February 2006

Psalm 145[144], 1-13

"I will give you glory!"

Vespers of Friday of the 4th Week

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. We have just prayed Psalm 145[144], a joyful song of praise to the Lord who is exalted as a tender and loving King, concerned for all his creatures. The liturgy presents this hymn to us in two separate parts that also correspond to the two poetical and spiritual movements of the Psalm itself. We now reflect on the first part, which corresponds to verses 1-13.

The Psalm is raised to the Lord who is invoked and described as "King" (cf. Ps 145[144]: 1), a depiction of the divine that is also dominant in other psalmic hymns (cf. Ps 47[46], 93[92]; 96[95]-99[98]).

Indeed, the spiritual centre of our canticle is constituted precisely by an intense and passionate celebration of the divine kingship. The Hebrew word *malkut*, "*reign*", is repeated in it four times, almost as if to indicate the four cardinal points of being and of history (cf. Ps 145[144]: 11-13). We know that this royal symbolism, which was also to be central in Christ's preaching, is the expression of God's saving project: he is not indifferent to human history; on the contrary, he desires to put a plan of harmony and peace for human history into practice with us and for us.

The whole of humanity is called together to implement this plan in order that it comply with the divine saving will, a will that is extended to all "men", to "all generations", from "age to age". It is a universal action that uproots evil from the world and instils in it the "glory" of the Lord, that is,

his personal, effective and transcendent presence.

2. The prayerful praise of the Psalmist, who makes himself the voice of all the faithful and today would like to be the voice of all of us, is directed to this heart of the Psalm, placed precisely at the centre of the composition. The loftiest biblical prayer is in fact the celebration of the works of salvation, which reveal the Lord's love for his creatures.

In this Psalm the Psalmist continues to praise the divine "name", that is, the person of the Lord (cf. vv. 1-2), who manifests himself in his historical action: indeed, his "works", "splendour", "wonderful works", "mighty deeds", "greatness", "justice", "patience", "compassion", "grace", "goodness" and "love" are mentioned.

It is a prayer in the form of a litany which proclaims God's entry into human events in order to bring the whole of created reality to a salvific fullness. We are not at the mercy of dark forces nor alone with our freedom, but rather, we are entrusted to the action of the mighty and loving Lord, who has a plan for us, a "reign" to establish (cf. v. 11).

3. This "kingdom" does not consist of power and might, triumph and oppression, as unfortunately is often the case with earthly kingdoms; rather, it is the place where compassion, love, goodness, grace and justice are manifested, as the Psalmist repeats several times in the flow of verses full of praise.

Verse 8 sums up this divine portrait: the Lord is "slow to anger, abounding in love". These words are reminiscent of God's presentation of himself on Sinai when he said: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34: 6).

We have here a preparation for the profession of faith in God of St John the Apostle, who simply tells us that he is love: "*Deus caritas est*" (cf. I Jn 4: 8, 16).

4. Our attention, as well as being fixed on these beautiful words that portray to us a God who is "slow to anger" and "full of compassion", always ready to forgive and to help, is also fixed on the very beautiful verse 9 which follows: "How good is the Lord to all, compassionate to all his creatures". These are words to meditate upon, words of consolation, a certainty that he brings to our lives.

In this regard, St Peter Chrysologus (c. 380 c. 450) says in his *Second Discourse on Fasting*: "'Great are the works of the Lord'; but this grandeur that we see in Creation is surpassed by the greatness of his mercy. Indeed, after the Prophet has said, 'Great are the works of God', in another passage he adds: 'His compassion is greater than all his works'. Mercy, brothers and sisters, fills the heavens, fills the earth.... That is why the great, generous, unique mercy of Christ, who reserved every judgment for a single day, allotted all of man's time to the truce of penance....

That is why the Prophet who did not trust in his own justice abandons himself entirely to God's mercy; "Have mercy on me, O God", he says, "according to your abundant mercy" (Ps 51[50]: 3)" (42, 4-5: *Sermoni 1-62bis, Scrittori dell'Area Santambrosiana*, 1, Milan-Rome, 1996, pp. 299, 301).

And so, let us too say to the Lord, "Have mercy on me, O God, you who are great in your mercy".

To special groups:

I extend a warm welcome to all the English-speaking pilgrims here today, including groups from England and the United States of America. I greet in particular those attending the Conference of European English-speaking Rectors as well as the trustees and officers of the University of Notre Dame. Upon all of you, I invoke the peace and joy of Jesus Christ our Lord!

Lastly, I address the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newly-weds*. Yesterday, we celebrated the memorial of St John Bosco, priest and educator. Look at him, dear *young people*, as an authentic teacher of life and holiness. Dear *sick people*, learn from his spiritual experience to trust in the Crucified Christ in every circumstance. And you, dear *newly-weds*, have recourse to his intercession so that he may help you take on generously your mission as husbands and wives.

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