

before him. We grow in simplicity, humility, sincerity, trust, acceptance, and love.

A psalm implies serenity of soul; it is the author of peace, which calms bewildering and seething thoughts. ... A psalm forms friendship, unites those separated, conciliates those at enmity.... A psalm is a city of refuge from the demons; a means of inducing help from the angels.... It is the elementary exposition for beginners, the improvement of those advancing, the solid support of the perfect, the voice of the Church. It brightens the feast days; it creates a sorrow that is in accordance with God ... A psalm is the work of angels, a heavenly institution, the spiritual incense.⁴⁵⁰

2. Short Prayers

Lord, have mercy.

685 As the Christian abides in the presence of God, he or she is seized with rapture and an admiration expressed in short prayerful exclamations. Such exclamations are the conclusions of all liturgical prayers, when we praise God, "the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit." The very mention of the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, accompanied by the sign of the holy Cross, is an example of a short prayer. Likewise, the sign of the Cross is one. The invocation of each of the Divine Persons by name—"Lord," "God," "Father," "Son of God," "Jesus Christ, Spirit of truth"—all of these are also prayers of this kind. Pronouncing in such short prayers the names of the Divine Persons, we express our joy or our anxiety, and we commend ourselves to God's protection. The invocation of God's name is never futile. However, we must beware never to "take the name of the Lord our God in vain," that is, irreverently, or in jest, or worse, in order to blaspheme.

686 Christian greetings are also brief prayers. We say: "Glory to Jesus Christ! —Glory forever!" "Christ is risen! —Truly he is risen!" "Christ is born! —Glorify him!" With such greetings Christians sanctify their encounters and their farewells. "Everlasting (or eternal) memory" is a prayer the living praise to God for the dead. Some brief prayers were so important from the very beginnings of Christianity that they have been preserved to this day in the languages of the first Christian communities. For example, the prayer "Alleluia!" (from the Hebrew meaning Praise the Lord.) is still used by all Christians without translation. "Amen" (from the Hebrew meaning so be it) is a brief prayer that

⁴⁵⁰ BASIL THE GREAT, Homily on Psalm 1, 2: PG 29, 212.

expresses the readiness of those praying to accept in peace all that the Lord might send.

687 Besides short prayers or exclamations, there are also short prayers that are petitions: "Lord, have mercy," and "Grant this, O Lord," for example. These petitions to the Lord are joined to a conviction that the mercy of God contains all that we need. Another short prayer, "To you, O Lord," is the prayer of dedication of ourselves, one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.' the simplicity of brief prayers is an expression of our renunciation of "extraneous words," trusting in the Lord who knows all that we need (see Mt 6:32).

3. The Gift of Tears in Prayer

Prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears

(Heb 5:7)

688 Saint Gregory of Nyssa taught: "Tears are like the blood of the soul's wounds."⁴⁵¹ Prayer with tears is God's gift to us. It enables us to lament our sins and feel inner longing for God. It is a deep sensation that descends upon us when God reveals his Divine beauty on the one hand, and our own imperfection on the other. It is the tension between the Divine perfect and the human imperfect. Shedding tears over our imperfection, we commiserate with all creation which, due to our sin, "groans and suffers."

689 The spiritual ascetics teach that the fear of God yields tears of repentance. Tears bring spiritual joy while joy gives strength. In virtue of this the soul bears fruit. thus, pain, suffering, and tears culminate in blessedness.⁴⁵² the gift of tears cleanses our spiritual eyes and enables us to see everything around us the way that God sees it. We then do not judge our neighbour but are filled with merciful love, having become capable of feeling the suffering and needs of others.

4. Vocal Prayer

Hear my voice, O Lord, when I cry aloud

(Ps 26[27]:

690 We pray with our lips, our mind, and our heart. Usually in the beginning prayer is only verbal. But such prayer should be joined to the prayer

⁴⁵¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, Homily for the Funeral of the Empress Flacilla. PG 46, 877-892.

⁴⁵² See SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN, Fourth Catechetical Discourse.