



The Holy See

GENERAL AUDIENCE OF JOHN PAUL II

Wednesday 6 November 2002

"May Your Kingdom Come"

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. Psalm 97[98], just proclaimed, belongs to a kind of hymn we have already met during the spiritual journey we are undertaking in the light of the Psalter.

This is a hymn to the Lord King of the universe and of history (cf. v. 6). It is described as a "new song" (cf. v. 1), which, in biblical language, means a perfect, full, solemn song accompanied by festive music. In fact, in addition to the choral song, the Psalmist evokes "the melodious sound" of the lyre (cf. v. 5), the trumpet and the horn (cf. v. 6), and also a kind of cosmic applause (cf. v. 8).

Moreover, the name of the "Lord" resounds repeatedly (six times), invoked as "our God" (v. 3). Hence, God is at the centre of the scene in all his majesty, while he carries out salvation in history and is awaited to "govern" the world and the peoples (cf. v. 9). The Hebrew verb that indicates "judgment" also means "to govern": so all await the effective action of the Sovereign of the entire earth who will usher in peace and justice.

2. The Psalm opens with the proclamation of divine intervention at the heart of the history of Israel (cf. vv. 1-3). The images of the "right hand" and the "holy arm" refer to Exodus, to the deliverance from the slavery of Egypt (cf. v. 1). Instead, the covenant with the chosen people is remembered through the two great divine perfections: "love" and "faithfulness" (cf. v. 3).

These signs of salvation are revealed "before the eyes of the peoples" and to "all the ends of the earth" (vv. 2.3) so that all humanity may be attracted to God the Saviour and open to his word and to his saving work.

3. The reception reserved for the Lord, who intervenes in history is marked by a universal praise: in addition to the orchestra and the hymns of the Temple of Zion (cf. vv. 5-6), the universe, as a kind of cosmic temple, also participates.

There are four singers of this immense choir of praise. The first is the roaring sea, that seems to be the constant basso of this grandiose hymn (cf. v. 7). The earth and the entire world (cf. vv. 4.7) with all its inhabitants follow united in solemn harmony. The third personification is that of the rivers, that are considered the arms of the sea which, with their rhythmic flow, seem to clap hands in applause (cf. v. 8). Finally, there are the mountains that seem to dance for joy before the Lord, even though they are the most massive and imposing creatures (cf. v. 8; Ps 28[29],6; 113[114],6).

So we have a colossal choir that has only one purpose: to exalt the Lord, King and just Judge. As mentioned, the end of the Psalm, in fact, presents God, "who comes to govern (and to rule) the earth ... with justice and equity" (Ps 97 [98],9).

This is our great hope and our petition: "Your Kingdom come" - a kingdom of peace, justice, and serenity, that will re-establish the original harmony of creation.

4. In this Psalm, with deep joy the Apostle Paul has recognized a prophecy of the work of God in the mystery of Christ. Paul made use of verse 2 to express the theme of his important Letter to the Romans: in the Gospel, the "justice of God is revealed" (cf. Rom 1,17), "is manifested" (cf. Rom 3,21).

Paul's interpretation confers on the Psalm a greater fullness of meaning. Read in the perspective of the Old Testament, the Psalm proclaims that God saves his people and that all the nations, seeing this, are in admiration. However, in the Christian perspective, God works salvation in Christ, Son of Israel; all the nations see him and are invited to benefit from this salvation, since the Gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, for the Jew first, and then for the Greek", namely the pagan (Rom 1,16). Moreover, "all the ends of the earth" not only "have seen the victory of our God" (Ps 97[98],3), but have received it.

5. In this perspective, Origen, a Christian writer of the third century, in a text quoted by St Jerome, interprets the "new song" of the Psalm as an anticipated celebration of the Christian newness of the crucified Redeemer. Now let us listen to his commentary in which he combines the song of the Psalmist with the proclamation of the Gospel.

"A new song is the Son of God who was crucified - something that had never before been heard of. A new reality must have a new song. 'Sing to the Lord a new song'. He who suffered the Passion is in reality a man; but you sing to the Lord. He suffered the Passion as a man, but saved as God". Origen continues: Christ "did miracles in the midst of the Jews: he healed paralytics, cleansed lepers, raised up the dead. But other prophets also did this. He changed a few loaves

into an enormous number, and gave countless people something to eat. But Elisha did this. Now, what new thing did he do to merit a new song? Do you want to know what new thing he did? God died as a man so that men might have life; the Son of Man was crucified to raise us up to heaven" (*74 Omelie sul libro dei Salmi [74 Homilies on the Book of Psalms]*, Milan, 1993, pp. 309-310).

To English-speaking pilgrims and visitors

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors, especially those from Denmark, Malta, India and the United States of America. Upon you and your families I invoke an abundance of divine blessings.

To the Italian-speaking pilgrims

I extend a cordial greeting to the Italian pilgrims. I want to single out those taking part in the "Course for the ongoing formation of missionaries", promoted by the Pontifical Salesian University. Dearly beloved, I hope that these days of study on topics connected with missionary work may renew in you a deep zeal to proclaim Christ to all peoples.

I also greet the representatives of the Community of Sant'Egidio who have come to Rome from several continents for the international convention on the theme "The Gospel of Peace". Dearly beloved, may this gathering inspire in each of you the resolution to promote justice and peace in every situation.

To youth, the sick, newly weds

Finally, I address you *young people, sick persons* and *newly-weds*. Dear *young people*, plan your future in full fidelity to the Gospel and grow according to the teaching and example of Jesus. Dear *sick persons*, offer your sufferings to the Lord so that, thanks to your sharing in his sufferings, he may extend his saving work throughout the world. Dear *newly-weds*, in the life you have begun, may you be guided by a living faith, so that your family may be inspired by an intense apostolic fervour.