

8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Lent

**Psalm 41(42):2-3,42:3-4**

*My soul is thirsting for  
God, the God of  
my life: when  
can I enter and  
see the face of  
God?*

Like the deer that  
yearns  
for running streams,  
so my soul is yearning  
for you, my God.

My soul is thirsting for  
God,  
the God of my life;  
when can I enter and  
see the face of God?

O send forth your light  
and your truth;  
let these be my guide.  
Let them bring me to your holy mountain,  
to the place where you dwell.

And I will come to the altar of God,  
the God of my joy.  
My redeemer, I will thank you on the harp,  
O God, my God.

Today's Psalm is one of those heart-wrenchingly simple ones which reminds us that we are called by God and have a deep thirst for Him. The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that the desire for God is written in our human hearts because we are created by God and for God. God never ceases to draw us to Himself therefore only in Him will we find that truth and happiness that we never stop searching for (c.f. CCC 27).

We need God because God has created us to need Him. Sadly, that need for God is often mistaken as a need for things. The first sin is when Eve was tempted to think that eating the forbidden fruit would make her deeply happy. In fact, the opposite happened as she and Adam were sent from God's intimate presence. (Gen.3:6,15-16). The psalmist recognises his



need for God and equates that desire to a thirst. When we are really, really thirsty, we cannot concentrate; our throat sticks and the need for water overwhelms all other senses. In this beautiful mosaic from the basilica of San Clemente in Rome, this thirst for God is illustrated by the deer drinking from the four sources of water (which represent the four Gospels) under the cross (see the enlarged photo). Jesus said that the water He gives us will quench our thirst and will become the source of Eternal Life (Jn. 4:13-14). This is represented in this mosaic by the swirling branches of the agapanthus which draws its life from the cross.

The psalmist continues, “When can I enter and see the face of God?” We can ask ourselves; do we really want to see God? How can we “see” God. Of course, we see Him in the Blessed Eucharist and Adoration is a beautiful time to be with Him and just sit in His company.

The psalmist continues, “send forth your light and your truth”. Jesus who is the “way the truth and the life” (Jn. 14:6) is also the light of the world (Jn.8:12). He enlightens all things, that is, by His light we can see our way in life. This light is demonstrated by the gold tesserae on the mosaic. The photo does not do it justice, but every tiny tile is placed at a different angle, thus reflecting the light. Remember that the church would have been lit by candles or lamps, and the whole mosaic would have “danced” in the reflected light.

In the last stanza the psalmist expresses his desire to be at the altar of God. The altar is a place of sacrifice. The psalmist of course was referring to the Temple and the sacrifices there, and this Psalm would have been prayed on the road to Jerusalem. For us, the altar in our churches is the place of Christ’s unbloody sacrifice, the central feature of this mosaic. In Lent we are travelling towards Jerusalem with Christ; towards His sacrifice. Let us thirst for Him even more so that we can be ready to enter more fully into the mysteries of Holy Week and Easter.