



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

We accompany Jesus with the Psalms of his life



"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12: 3) - Image : mosaic of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna.

Midway through our Lenten journey, the Grand Master invites us to dwell on the prayer of Jesus and on the Psalms that have constantly accompanied the path of the Son of God, from his childhood to the Cross. Let us refresh ourselves, drawing on the source of our salvation, to continue our journey towards Jerusalem and the joy of Easter with hope.

We entered Lent allowing ourselves to be drawn by the example of Jesus. Lent, in fact, is the time in which, in the likeness of the Lord, we can dedicate a few more moments to prayer, a place of privileged dialogue with God, but also a propitious time for reflection on our life.

The Church prays because Jesus prayed and his disciples learned from him to pray; in this he left us a norm and a paradigm (Saint Cyprian), the "Our Father". Furthermore, Jesus prayed according to the style and the Jewish tradition of his time, of which the Psalms are a vibrant and elevated expression as they are rooted in the life of Israel. Jesus prayed with the Psalms. He learned them within his natural family, like children, who learn their first prayers from their mother and father; he also learned them in the Nazareth Synagogue, a place that for him was also an initiation into the faith. The primitive Church, formed by Hebrew-Christians, recited or sang them according to the Jewish tradition; thus the Psalms were inherited by the Church which added, at the end of them, the Trinitarian doxology (that is the short formula of praise to the Trinity). Jesus, Therefore, prayed with the Psalms. Reciting them, as they do in religious and lay communities (Lauds in the morning and Vespers in the evening), is as if to prolong prayer in the style and manner of the Lord, in this way Jesus joins us and we are united with him in a perennial intercession of supplication and prayer to the Lord.

According to the Evangelist Luke (4, 1-12), at the end of the forty days of fasting, Jesus is tempted in his faith by the devil, who twice asks him the question: "If you are the Son of God," quoting him ambiguously from Psalm 91 (v.11-12); the Psalm of trust in God that begins with these words: "*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty*": in other words, whoever trusts in God, even in the dark moments of life, is protected by Him. Jesus knows this Psalm and knows well that in the course of his existence he will always be provoked to confront himself with his identity. This temptation will represent the constant plot for the days of the Lord's public life, right up to the last. This will happen on the occasion of the fiery zeal in driving the traders out of the Temple of Jerusalem ("What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this? - John 2:18), or again in Capernaum where he was asked what title he spoke for (John 6:30 ; Mt 16, 1-4); the Pharisees and Sadducees will ask to put him to the test (Mt 16: 1); the Samaritan woman of *Shechem* will ponder this (Jn 4:29) as will the high priest (Caiaphas), using the exact same words of the devil: "Are you the Christ, the Son of God?" (Mk 14: 61). Pilate will also ask him: "Who are you?" (Mk 15:2); the bystanders will also ask him as he died on the Cross: "If you are ..." (Lk 23: 37), and even one of the criminals crucified alongside him (Lk 23: 40). On the Cross, where there is now no hope, Jesus, according to Luke, will renew his faith by reciting Psalm 31: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46), which is the Psalm of confident reliance on evidence; according to Matthew, Jesus concludes the last moments with Psalm 22: "" *Eli, Eli, lemà sabactani?* ", which means " *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* " the prayer that express a hope filled sorrow.

Let us return to Psalm 91, the one quoted by the devil, and try to understand its meaning. In it 'someone' questions the praying person, that is Christ - but it is also you and I who through him are continually questioned or tempted in the same way: You who in your faith say you live in the shelter of the Most High, stand in the shadow of the Almighty, you who hold the Lord as your refuge and strength, you who trust in Him, you who are certain that He will deliver you from deceptions, from death, or the plague - today we might even add from a mortal covid - Are you sure that you are protected when extermination devastates everything and that the Lord is truly your refuge? Are you sure that your 'shelter' defends you and that the Eternal will give orders to His angels to guard you and preserve you from your enemies?

This Psalm is Christological. We see it clearly if we look at it in filigree. That is, it speaks of Jesus, of his temptations, of his messianic conscience and of his trust in the mission received; the answer is also clearly in the same Psalm and expresses faith, against all doubts: "Because he[b] loves me," says the Lord, "*I will rescue him; protect him, answer him; be with him in trouble, deliver him and honour him.*" (vv. 14- 16). This Psalm is anthropological. In filigree there is my psychological physiognomy, my temptations, myself.

This Psalm, placed at the beginning of public life, the Lord has recited and fulfilled it for me and for you too. It is worthwhile recalling the Lord's exhortation that in temptations we are called to trust in him: "*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.*"(John 14: 1). As Benedict XVI explained well, at the beginning of faith "*being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction*" (Deus caritas est, 1).

"*The children of the Church* - Hesychius presbyter of Jerusalem will write - *will rejoice in their king, Christ*", and with him they enter the Kingdom.

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(March 12, 2021)