

## Psalm 31

Last week we reflected on Psalm 34 which gave us the famous line, "*Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.*" As mentioned previously, the psalm chosen for the liturgy is meant to unpack the first reading. In this case, Stephen reflects the death of our Lord in that he prays for his persecutors as they take his life. Like our Lord, Stephen offers his spirit to God by saying, "*Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.*"

Interestingly, Psalm 31 was one of the bedtime prayers that Jewish parents taught their children. In our Catholic tradition, we have some well-known bedtime prayers such as:

Now I lay me down to sleep: Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.

Children's Bedside Prayer: Bless me, Lord, as this day ends, Bless my family and all my friends. Keep me safe throughout the night, and wake me with the morning's light.

These beautiful prayers are meant to bring peace and solace to children, helping them realize that whether they are awake or asleep, they are safe in the Father's hands through our Lord Jesus Christ.

When Jesus offered these final words from Psalm 31 on the Cross, he was really saying a *bedtime* prayer. Jewish parents taught Psalm 31 to their children before going to sleep – Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. And remember who is standing at the foot of the cross when Jesus dies - our Blessed Mother. She is the one who taught him this prayer! And she offers her Son to the Father for the salvation of the world as He goes to "sleep" or dies on the Cross.

What's even more interesting is that Luke tells us that from noon to 3:00 pm darkness fell over the whole land (Lk 23:44). We also have the final words from our Lord from John's Gospel, "*It is finished*" (Jn 19:30). In other words, after accomplishing all the Father willed, Jesus commends himself into His Father's hands.

How beautiful and fulfilling it would be to have the peace of mind at your passing knowing you have fulfilled all the Father willed you to accomplish in Christ and be able to say those words, "*Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.*" The Church challenges you to offer your prayers to God before going to bed every night as a way of preparing for your final "sleep" of dying and commending yourself to God.

Before going to bed each night, do your nightly examination of conscience – thanking God for His blessings and asking Him for forgiveness for your sins!

~St. Thérèse, pray for us!