



TIMES OF THE LITURGY

Sunday - 7.45am - Lauds | 8.15am - Low Mass | 9.15am - Dominican Rite Mass (Extraordinary Form) | 11am - Sung Conventual Mass | 6pm - Low Mass | 7pm - Vespers.

Monday - Friday - 7am - Lauds | 7.30am - Conventual Mass | 6.15pm - Devotions and Meditation | 6.30pm - Vespers. [N.B. First Fridays of the month, Vespers in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament with a period of Adoration from 6.15pm.]

Saturday - 9am - Lauds | 9.30am - Conventual Mass | 4.30-6pm - Confessions | 6.15pm - Sung Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary | 6.30pm - Vespers.

THIS WEEK

Sun 27 **XVII SUNDAY**

Mon 28 *feria*

Tue 29 Ss Martha, Mary, & Lazarus

Wed 30 *feria*

Thu 31 S. Ignatius Loyola

Fri 1 S. Alphonsus Liguori

Sat 2 Our Lady on Saturday

Sun 3 **XVIII SUNDAY**

SUPPORT US

Our ministry relies on the generosity of our friends and supporters. If you would like to support us make a donation in the cloister, visit our website, or speak to or email the bursar, Fr Albert.

cambridge.bursar@english.op.org

WHAT IS GOD? PHILOSOPHICAL, CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC APPROACHES

22 – 25 August 2025 at the Christian Heritage Centre in partnership with CEPHAS. For more information and to book, please visit <<https://christianheritagecentre.com/events/what-is-god/>>

CAMBRIDGE

CORPUS CHRISTI PROCESSION, 2026

To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Diocese of East Anglia next year, it has been proposed that there be a Deanery-Wide Corpus Christit Procession in Cambridge. Three previous attempts have be made in planning a large Corpus Christi Procession in Cambridge, but each time people have been taken-up with other priorities and nothing has happened. The Cambridge deanery is therefore calling on volunteers who have planning skills to help make a Cambridge Corpus Christi Procession next year a reality. If you would like to volunteer, please email <olemoffice@rcdea.org.uk>.

SAFEGAUARDING

Blackfriars Cambridge operates in accordance with Statutory Safeguarding Guidance and the Safeguarding Policies of the Catholic Church in England and Wales at all times. Our Lay Safeguarding Representative is Emanuela Di Pietro. She can be contacted on 07516 667752 or at <safeguardingrepresentative.cambridge@english.op.org>. The local safeguarding friar is fr Gregory Pearson, OP. He can be contacted on 07724 062971 or at <gregory.pearson@english.op.org>. Alternatively, the Religious Life Safeguarding Service can be contacted on 0151 5562311 or <safeguarding@religioussafeguarding.org> if you have any concerns.

PSALM 49 & THE FATE OF HUMANITY

The Psalms have been with us for more than the two thousand years of Christianity, perhaps in some cases as much as a thousand years before the coming of Christ. They are hard to classify, and the act of classifying the Psalms into different genres is itself questionable. Classifications give teachers something to teach and students something to learn and bring up in exams, but the classifications do not quite work. Psalms are like human beings, unique creations, and classifications are of their nature always superficial. More importantly, it hides the great big fact about the Psalms which is that we really have no idea who wrote them, who compiled them, and in what ways they were used by the people of Israel. Somehow, in some way, the Psalms emerged, and we have been using them as a treasure for the Church ever since. Since Our Lord quotes them, most dramatically as part of his dying words on the cross, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Psalm 22), we can trust in the value of these Psalms. They are the prayers of the Church because they are the prayers of Jesus himself.

Psalm 49 is an example of the classification of Psalms. It is usually described as a wisdom Psalm, but what is meant by wisdom? The writings in the Old Testament, which are called wisdom writings, are quite varied. We could call the Book of Daniel an example of wisdom writings, even though it contains a narrative about Daniel and his companions, and Daniel is remembered as a prophet. Then the book of Proverbs is another example of wisdom writing, even though it is as you would expect from its name, a book of wise sayings. The book of Wisdom is presented as a sort of autobiography of Solomon, although it is only in a later title that he is named.

Psalm 49 contains elements of this. It becomes autobiographical in the sense that it is written in the first person, but this is just a matter of form. 'My mouth shall speak wisdom, and the meditation of my heart understanding. The psalm is not about a person but an address to all humanity. It begins with these words. 'Listen to this all the peoples, give ear to this all the inhabitants of the world. Both the sons of humanity, and the sons of man together, rich and poor.'

The psalm addresses humanity, with four phrases any one of which would describe all mankind. The world is divided into peoples with the descendants of Israel being one of those peoples, even though very divided. All peoples inhabit the world, but the word used for world here, elsewhere refers to the period of life that a human being has, and the other two phrases, are literally, sons of Adam, sons of a human being. Having made clear that he, the psalmist is speaking to all humanity, he then divides that humanity into something unexpected. Not men and women, not gentile and Jew, but rich and poor.

The psalm is not about social justice, or inequality. The psalm is actually about death, but it is also about what God can do about that inevitable fact. What God does, so the psalmist proclaims later is to redeem us from death. This is put in personal terms in verse 15. 'But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will take me.'

I have jumped ahead because this is the core of the Psalm, because the rich think they can ransom their own life or pay God to either avoid death, or be saved from it. The idea that the rich believe that they can take their wealth with them may seem trite to us, but the pagans who surrounded the Jews did seem to have a view of the next life which was a continuation of the present life. The pharaohs had their pyramids with their possessions placed in the grave with them. If the Psalm is a late psalm, being one with wisdom themes it may well be, then the Psalmist might be aware of the way that the Romans symbolised their confidence in the continuance of worldly success. At the most extreme they did this by deification of their great legendary figures. Later of course, they would deify the emperors. Pagan religions often offered means of guaranteeing success after death, to climb high or to maintain the status of this life in the next. At one point the psalmist refers to the rich wishing to take their glory with them. While glory can mean wealth as such, it is probably a deliberate choice to contest the idea that glory on the earth is a guarantee of glory in the next world.

It should be said that not all pagans seem to have such an optimistic view of life after death, but the psalmist is concerned with the universal fact of death and what it says about those who seek the wrong solution. It is not just the rich and the poor who die, but the wise die too, the brilliant and the fools together. The psalmist relativises his own wisdom which he had boasted off at the beginning. We should also notice the use of the word together, as in 'rich and poor together'. The rich and the poor, the clever and the stupid must understand that there is no difference in their lives. Wisdom itself can become a delusion just like wealth, if it makes us think that the solution is in our own selves. So, we have immortality symbols, delusional ways of pretending that we can extend our lives beyond death, such as naming the land after ourselves. 'Their graves are their homes forever, their residences to generation after generation, yet they call their land after their names.' It would be superficial to see this as a denial of the resurrection of the rich. What the psalmist is trying to show is that the symbols of immortality do not change anything. Death is real and our attempts to make it unreal always fail. The Hebrew of this Psalm is at times puzzling though the general meaning seems quite clear. A particularly difficult verse is V 13, which is translated in many ways because of this. In the New Revised Standard version we have, 'This is the path of those who have foolish confidence, yet after them people approve of their boasts.' The last part of this is literally, 'after them in their mouth they will take pleasure'. Obviously that is too literal, but the basic meaning seems to be that the successful imagine that they have a sort of survival by being in the mouths of the living, but this is a delusion. I might also point out that in saying mouth, just as with wisdom, the psalmist is showing his own limitations, since he has said that 'my mouth will speak wisdom'. What is left then is quite simply God. It is God who redeems, which for Christians is by the Resurrection. The psalmist does not commit himself to Resurrection in this psalm as the form of redemption God will offer, but restricts himself to the simple fundamental claim that whosoever we are saved, it will be the work of God, not humanity. Of course, we know that in Christ, humanity did take a role in our salvation but that is outside the scope of this psalm.

MARTHA, MARY, AND LAZARUS

The gospels describe how Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus gave Jesus hospitality in their home at Bethany outside Jerusalem. Jesus is said to have loved all three. After Lazarus' death, he wept and was moved by the sisters' grief to bring Lazarus back from the dead. Martha recognised Jesus as the Messiah, while Mary anointed his feet and, on another occasion, was commended by Jesus for her attentiveness to his teaching while Martha served. From this, Mary is traditionally taken to be an example of the contemplative life and Martha an example of the active spiritual life.

From a Sermon by S. Augustine: Our Lord's words teach us that though we labour among the many distractions of this world, we should have but one goal. For we are but travellers on a journey without as yet a fixed abode; we are on our way, not yet in our native land; we are in a state of longing, not yet of enjoyment. But let us continue on our way, and continue without sloth or respite, so that we may ultimately arrive at our destination.

Martha and Mary were sisters, related not only by blood but also by religious aspirations. They stayed close to our Lord and both served him harmoniously when he was among them. Martha welcomed him as travellers are welcomed. But in her case, the maidservant received her Lord, the invalid her Saviour, the creature her Creator, to serve him bodily food while she was to be fed by the Spirit. For the Lord willed to put on the form of a slave, and under this form to be fed by his own servants, out of condescension and not out of need. For this was indeed condescension, to present himself to be fed; since he was in the flesh he would indeed be hungry and thirsty.

Thus was the Lord received as a guest who came unto his own and his own received him not; but as many as received him, he gave them the power to become sons of God, adopting those who were servants and making them his brothers, ransoming the captives and making them his co-heirs. No one of you should say: "Blessed are they who have deserved to receive Christ into their homes!" Do not grieve or complain that you were born in a time when you can no longer see God in the flesh. He did not in fact take this privilege from you. As he says: Whatever you have done to the least of my brothers, you did to me.

But you, Martha, if I may say so, are blessed for your good service, and for your labours you seek the reward of peace. Now you are much occupied in nourishing the body, admittedly a holy one. But when you come to the heavenly homeland will you find a traveller to welcome, someone hungry to feed, or thirsty to whom you may give drink, someone ill whom you could visit, or quarrelling whom you could reconcile, or dead whom you could bury? No, there will be none of these tasks there. What you will find there is what Mary chose. There we shall not feed others, we ourselves shall be fed. Thus what Mary chose in this life will be realised there in all its fullness; she was gathering fragments from that rich banquet, the Word of God. Do you wish to know what we will have there? The Lord himself tells us when he says of his servants, Amen, I say to you, he will make them recline and passing he will serve them.

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