

Seeking God's Mercy Through Psalm 51
by Kim Padan

Hey everyone, it's Kim from Illinois once again. So glad that you came back, for another video episode of this virtual prayer conference. I hope the conference has been a blessing to you and I hope that you will continue to participate.

As I have been discussing the Psalms, I thought to myself "Maybe I should focus specifically on Psalm 51". Why is that? Psalm 51 is often known as the Psalm of penance. It is a beautiful Psalm which is actually included every Friday morning in the Liturgy of the Hours. That's how special and beautiful this Psalm is!

You may recognize it, not by the number but by a few phrases which are often used as the response during Sunday mass. "Create in me a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me". That probably sounds familiar. Or perhaps, "Have mercy on me God in your kindness". Sound familiar? I hope so!

This is a beautiful psalm where David just dug deep and he acknowledged that he had sinned against God and he was begging God to forgive him, to not turn away from him. It is heart wrenching when you look at the Psalm in it's entirety. As we are in the season of Lent, we need to dig deep. We need to look at ourselves honestly, completely and fully. After all, God already knows what we've done, what we haven't done that we should have done. God already knows what we hold in our hearts and the thoughts that we have and that we act on. Maybe no one else does but God does. Even though He already knows it, He wants us to speak with our mouth what we've done and to ask Him for forgiveness.

So, I thought I would talk a little bit about that and share with you some music which I learned for Psalm 51 a long time ago. I have a CD recording with John Michael Talbot, one of my favorite Catholic songwriters and performers and just a wonderful, prayerful man. And I have a recording of a lot of different songs and some of his preaching that he shares with his community in Arkansas. The music is sung with a whole community and it's kinda between a chant and a contemporary hymn. There's just something very powerful and peaceful in it.

How long have I known this? Well I bought this CD before I met my husband. So, it's been a long time! And I encourage you whether you sing the Psalm, as I'm about to do, or if you get a book like this, or pull out your bible with the entire book of Psalms; put a bookmark in Psalm 51. And pray that on Friday with the

whole Church. Pray that anytime that you feel that you need to look deeper at yourself. I know it really helps me.

So, here is the music that I want to share with you. Oh I thought I could get away without having my glasses on because I sing it so often but I'm a little nervous that I'm gonna get the lines messed up [puts on glasses]. So, here we go. Oh, I should mention as a little side note, the way he does the, "glory be to God" at the end, the text is a little bit different to fit the tune. So, hang in there.

[Begins singing]

“Have mercy on me God in Your kindness,
in Your compassion blot out my offense.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.
My offenses truly I know them,
my sin is always before me.
Against You, You alone have I sinned,
what is evil in Your sight I have done.
That You may be justified when You give sentence
and be without reproach when You judge.
O see in guilt I was born,
a sinner was I conceived.
Indeed Your love truth in the heart,
then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.
O purify me that I shall be clean,
O wash me I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me hear rejoicing and gladness,
that the bones You have crushed may revive.
From my sins turn away Your face,
and blot out all my guilt.
A pure heart create for me O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
nor deprive me of Your Holy Spirit.
Give me again the joy of Your help,
with a spirit of fervor sustain me.
That I may teach transgressors Your ways,
and sinners may return to You.
O rescue me God my helper,
and my tongue shall ring out Your goodness.

O Lord open my lips and my mouth shall declare your praise. For in sacrifice You take no delight,
burnt offering from me You would refuse.
My sacrifice a contrite spirit,
a humble contrite spirit You would not spurn.
In Your goodness show favor to Zion,
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
Then You will be pleased with lawful sacrifice,
holocaust offered on Your altar.
Glory to the Father Almighty,
to His Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
to the Spirit that dwells in our hearts,
both now and forever.
Amen.” [Singing ends].

I don't know about you, maybe it's because I'm so familiar with the setting, but that really touches my heart. I think about a lot of the phrases in this Psalm. When we pray, “A pure heart, a clean heart create in me”, “A steadfast spirit”. We need to be steadfast in following Christ. There will be a lot of temptations in the world every single day. Temptations to skip prayer time, temptations to yell or get in an argument with a loved one, temptations to well... Just a lot of different temptations! We all have our different temptations but we need to have God give us that steadfast spirit.

“Give me again the joy of Your help”. The joy, we think about that, when God helps us we can feel joy; we can feel like “Yes! I'm not alone!” He's carrying me through this. He's lifting me up. He's giving me guidance. I feel joy in knowing that the Lord is with me.

One of my favorite phrases, “O lord open my lips and my mouth shall declare your praise”. This is actually something that often is said before Morning Prayer. But, as a speaker, I will say it before a presentation at a podium somewhere because I do want whatever I say out of my mouth to proclaim the praise of God. Ultimately, that is my greatest vocation.

So, again, whether you recite Psalm 51 from your prayer book, from a bible, whether you find a hymnal that you want to sing from, reflect on it during this Lenten season. Reflect on it during this Year of Mercy. Realize that mercy is something that God showers upon us and gives us each and every day. “Your mercies are new everyday” is a phrase from Lamentations.

So if we rejoice in that, if we seek God's mercy, pray for God's mercy, repent of our sins; then mercy, grace will be ours. Thanks be to God!

Thank you for joining me again! God bless you! I'll see you soon!