

Starting A Conversation With God & Responding to His Word  
by Kim Padan

Hi everyone, it's Kim from Illinois again. I want to talk to you a little bit more about the Psalms and how I like to pray them.

As I mentioned before, as Catholics we pray the Psalms in liturgical prayer throughout the day. Whether it's in the holy sacrifice of the mass or the liturgy of the hours we are blessed to have the Psalms woven throughout our prayer day.

But you know, sometimes I want to pray a Psalm on my own. In a more impromptu way. I want to take the words and internalize them and personalize them. As with any other scriptural passage, the Psalms provide so much that we can ponder and ponder deeply. It's really a good way to start up a conversation with God.

Here's what I mean; I often like to read a stanza from my bible or the bible app on my phone and then respond to God's word out loud in prayer.

Now, if I had to pick a favorite Psalm (I have lots of favorites) but if I had to pick one favorite, it would be Psalm 62. I know several musical versions, which I enjoy singing quite a bit. But, sometimes I just recite it and then pray after I recite a portion of it.

Now, I know that a lot of people struggle with extemporaneous prayer. Perhaps you feel more comfortable praying a memorized prayer like the Lord's Prayer the Hail Mary. Or perhaps you like using a devotional where something is already written out for you.

But I find extemporaneous prayer is a great way to really have a one-on-one, personal conversation with our Lord. I'm not sure how I learned how to pray this. But I know that I was exposed to some charismatic Catholics when I was young and even now in my adult I have a lot of non-Catholic friends who attend charismatic churches and some who are not charismatic but they still have that extemporaneous prayer.

And so I've had a lot of practice with it. It's something that I've grown very comfortable with. Now, you might still wonder what is it that I'm talking about? I'm talking about reading a portion of the Psalms and then reflecting on it.

Let me show you what I mean. Now, I have to put on some glasses here. Because my eyes are getting old! Like the rest of me but that's okay.

So, I have my Bible, and I pull this out, and I have several Psalms that are marked for sharing here later today. But here's Psalm 62... And if you want you can just close your eyes and pray with me as I read just a portion of it:

“Only in God is my soul at rest. From Him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation. My stronghold. I shall not be disturbed at all.”

Only in the Lord. Only in You will I be at rest. Everything else is second best. You alone Lord are the source of my strength, the source of my courage, the source of all that I have and all that I ever hope to be. I thank You Lord for being my strength, I thank for being reliable, I thank you for lifting me up, holding me up in those times when I struggle. I am grateful that even if everything else falls away, I have You my God. I have You. I love You. I trust You. And I am so grateful to be Your daughter. Amen.

So, really what I did there was I just prayed a stanza. Sometimes that's all it takes. Sometimes I will pray the entire Psalm, it depends on how long it is. But after one stanza or two stanzas and then an extemporaneous prayer, I might feel fulfilled or content. I feel like I've had that time with God and it's a real blessing.

Now, when I do this, I try to also sit quietly afterwards because it's very important for us to allow God to answer. To soak in His word but then also wait for Him to respond to us. And, of course, that's less tangible. It takes time to discern what it is that He may be sharing with us. But I think it's very important to have that quiet time after we reflect on His word.

Now, you may wonder how I select a Psalm to pray. There's 150 to choose from and they all have beautiful words they are all wonderful prayers, wonderful poetry. But I do have some favorites and I'm going to share with you some of the ones I like to pray and when I choose to pray them.

I tend to look at the mood I'm in but also what's in store for me that day. If I have a project I'm working on, if I have a loved one who is going through a particular struggle, if there is something going on in current events, something in our world that weighs heavy on my heart, there are certain psalms that I find very very helpful to my prayer.

So, I'm going to pull a few of them out and not do the prayer as I just did but just read a few lines so you can see what it is I'm talking about. Okay, for instance to start with, Psalm 15. This one is something that I like to pray when I need to remind myself that I am a follower of Christ. That I am a child of God and I need to act like it.

Here's some words from Psalm 15:

“O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy mountain? He who walks blamelessly and does justice who thinks the truth in his heart and slanders not with his tongue.”

Wow! I need to walk blamelessly. I need to think truth in my heart to not slander others, to not gossip, to not complain. If I'm really going to dwell in the house of the Lord I need to examine myself and work on myself. Important words there in Psalm 15.

Now, after that one, I'm gonna check out another one here. We've got Psalm 42! Now Psalm 42 is something that a lot of people are familiar with and that's because we hear these words often during mass.

“As the deer longs for the running waters so my soul longs for You O God. Athirst is my soul for God, the living God: when shall I go and behold the face of God?”

This is another Psalm where I hear music in my head and I can sing it often because I think about the longing, the wanting to be in the presence of God. And struggling when we go though, maybe, a dry time in our prayer life when we are praying and it feels like nothing is really happening. Or when life outside of our prayer time is so chaotic and we feel like we just need to rest. So, Psalm 42 is something that I find great comfort in.

Another one! Well, I already mentioned Psalm 62 and the reason why I really like Psalm 62 is because it is that reassurance of Who is the source of my strength. That it is God who is the source of my strength. That in various times in my life: when my health was poor, after I lost my baby, when I had struggles at work, when maybe there's a conflict with a friend; all of those times I knew that I could trust in God. That He was my rock and as long as I leaned on Him, I would get through those tough times.

Psalm 80 is something that I've been praying recently for our nation. I realize that there are people from around the globe that are participating in this prayer

conference and so I'm going to be speaking about, a little bit here, on praying for the United States. But let's face it, our whole world needs prayer. I'm certain that all of you can think about struggles in your own community whether it's your town, your village, your nation; we all need to pray for the worldwide community.

And here's some words from Psalm 80:

“O shepherd of Israel hearken. O God of the flock of Joseph from your throne upon the cherubim shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. Rouse your power, and come to save us. O Lord of Hosts, restore us; if your face shine upon us then we shall be saved.”

Wow! Restore us! That's a prayer that the United States of America really needs right now! We need to have God restore our nation. Great prayer especially during this election year.

Okay, another Psalm that I really enjoy is Psalm 139. Having been involved in the pro-life movement for a long time, I have referred to Psalm 139 in some of the talks I've given but also in my prayer for the cause of the unborn. Psalm 139 gives us scriptural evidence that God knew us before we were born. That we were precious in His sight before we were born; that in the womb we matter.

Psalm 139 says:

“Truly you have formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I give you thanks that I am fearfully wonderfully made; wonderful are your works!”

This is something that I like to pray when I'm thinking about my friends and colleagues in the pro-life movement; to give them strength and courage knowing that they are doing what God has called them to do.

And the last one I want to talk about here today is Psalm 145. Several of the Psalms at the end are Psalms of praise and victory. And I love Psalm 145 because it just feels like David was about ready to burst at the seams. That he was so filled with joy and love for the Lord. And I really really enjoy this too when I want to just sing out my praise for God.

“I will extoll you, O my God and king; and I will bless your name forever and ever. Everyday I will bless you; and I will praise your name forever and ever. Great is the

Lord and highly to be praised, His greatness is unsearchable. Generation after generation praises your works and proclaims your might.”

This is like, oooh! Just a burst of energy like we know that God is so amazing and we can't wait to tell the rest of the world about it! And I think this is another Psalm that can actually life us out of despair, that it can strengthen us during difficult times. Because if we remember our God is king! He is sovereign and He loves us! He's not just powerful, he's loving. And that gives us reason to praise Him.

You know, I could go on and on. I highlighted a few of my favorite Psalms and talked about praying them in a way that is kinda personal; praying just a segment of them out loud and then reflecting on them as, you know, how God speaks to us. I think I could go on and on but I'm not going to do that today. Instead, what I want to do is close with praying a Psalm that you're probably very familiar with. It is a Psalm that is used throughout the liturgical year. It's often sung at funerals to give us comfort. And so it is my hope and prayer that this Psalm with give you comfort in whatever your struggles may be this day. It's Psalm 23 and let's pray:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose. Beside restful waters he leads me. He refreshes my soul. He guides me in right paths for his namesake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil. For you are at my side. With your rod and your staff that give me courage.”

Lord you are our good shepherd. You guide us. You carry us through the tough times when we are lost, when we wander away. You love us and you give us rest and comfort in the hardest times of our life. I just thank you, Lord, for being there as a loving shepherd; as someone who cares for each individual member of your flock. Knowing full well, knowing full well that You would do anything. And you have already done everything for us!

We praise You Lord. We thank You and we ask that You continue to shine forth on us. Continue to guide us Lord. We thank You in advance for the blessings that You will give to us this day. We make this prayer in Your name. For You are the one God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

I hope that these thoughts on the Psalms inspire you, maybe, to pick up the book of Psalms. Even outside of liturgy and pray them as your own prayers. Go ahead and

take ownership of these. The Church has given us this gift so that thousand of years after they were written we can still pray them.

So, I hope you pray them today and I will see you again later in this conference.

God bless! Bye, bye.