

## PRIEST AND KING

My favourite psalm from the middle of the collection, and appropriate for today's feast, is Psalm 110 (in Hebrew numbering, 109 in the Greek). In origin this is a song for a ceremony of coronation of the king at Jerusalem. Christians see this king as the forerunner of Christ, the king of the line of David. It recalls two sworn promises of God. The first is that this king will reign with limitless power at God's right hand, and the second that the king will be a priest of the ancient line of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was the priest-king of Jerusalem to whom Abraham paid honour. The king of the ancient city, Jebusite Jerusalem, was always a priest-king, personally chosen and sanctified by God, "from the womb before the dawn I begot you". He stood before the Lord as the representative of the people, and so a priest. The letter to the Hebrews insists that Jesus was a priest of the line not of Aaron but of Melchizedek, that is, not of the Temple priesthood according to the Law of Moses, but of an even older order. Jesus surely refers to this promise when he says before the high priest, "you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power". The phrase "seated at the right hand of God" is used again and again in the New Testament to describe Christ's exaltation to God at the resurrection and ascension, his ultimate glory. It is founded on and brings to fulfilment the promises of this psalm.



What about that strange little bit at the end, "he will drink from the stream by the wayside"? When Solomon succeeds David as king he holds a sort of inauguration party with all his friends at the spring beside the road leading past Jerusalem. Drinking from this, the only spring of Jerusalem, must have been part of the ceremony of kingship – the water of life.

## Mass text

### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**How worthy is the Lamb who was slain,  
to receive power and divinity,  
and wisdom and strength and honour.  
To him belong glory and power for ever and ever.**

FIRST READING Ezekiel 34:11-12. 15-17

PSALM Psalm 22

RESPONSE **The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.**

1. The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.  
Fresh and green are the pastures  
where he gives me repose. **R.**
2. Near restful waters he leads me,  
to revive my drooping spirit.  
He guides me along the right path;  
he is true to his name. **R.**
3. You have prepared a banquet for me  
in the sight of my foes.  
My head you have anointed with oil;  
my cup is overflowing. **R.**

4. Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me  
all the days of my life.  
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell  
for ever and ever. **R.**

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 15:20-26. 28

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!  
Blessings on him who comes in the name of  
the Lord!  
Blessings on the coming kingdom of our father  
David!  
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL Matthew 25:31-46

### COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**The Lord sits as King for ever.  
The Lord will bless his people with peace.**

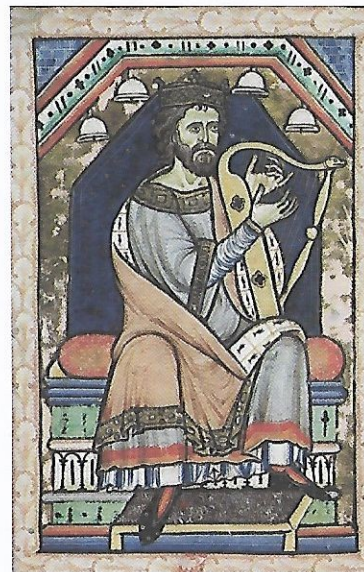
**Next Sunday's Readings:**  
Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1. 3-8  
1 Corinthians 1:3-9  
Mark 13:33-37



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# SUNDAY BULLETIN

## THE PSALMS



The Psalms are the prayer-songs of Israel. We meet them in the liturgy chiefly in the form of responses to the first reading of scripture at Mass, often echoing the joys, worries, pleas or praises of that reading. Notionally, the Psalms were all written by David, the sweet singer of Israel. In fact their composition stretches over a thousand years. Some, like Psalm 29 (Greek numbering 28, "The God of glory thunders"), were taken over from the pre-Israelite Canaanite worship of the storm god Baal. Others, like Psalm 1, date from the very latest Old Testament Wisdom tradition in the final centuries before Christ. They represent

Israel's response to God. We know that Jesus himself prayed them; repeatedly he quotes them in his teaching. They are used in the prayer of the Church, and may well express our own personal prayers. We have space here to consider only three: the first, the last and one in the middle.

Psalm 1, then, is a Wisdom Psalm; it uses two contrasting images to express the wisdom revealed again and again in the Bible about the good life in accordance with God's principles – and the opposite. One who delights in the Law (God's promises to Israel) day and night is like a flourishing tree beside a plentiful supply of water, blooming and fruitful. The opposite is like the light chaff left after threshing, blown away and dispersed into nothingness. This psalm is placed at the beginning of the collection as a general heading.

The final three psalms of the collection (148-150) form a noisy celebration of praise, calling on the people to use all their musical instruments to praise the Lord, and calling on every element in creation to join in: sun, moon, sea monsters, young and old, high and low. That is how our praise of the Lord should end up, with unrestrained joy, like David dancing before the Ark of the Lord as it was carried in procession up to Jerusalem.

## The God who speaks



Fr Henry Wansbrough OSB concludes this series for the Year of the Word by looking at the book of Psalms.

22 NOVEMBER 2020

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,  
KING OF THE UNIVERSE

YEAR A

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK II