



The Holy See

GENERAL AUDIENCE OF JOHN PAUL II

Wednesday, 30 April 2003

Psalm 101[100]

"I will sing of loyalty and of justice!"

1. After the two catecheses on the meaning of the Easter celebrations, let us return to our reflection on the *Liturgy of Lauds*. For Tuesday of the Fourth Week it offers us Psalm 101[100], which we have just heard.

It is a meditation that paints the portrait of the ideal politician whose model of life must be divine action in the governance of the world: an action dictated by perfect moral integrity and a resolute commitment to combating all forms of injustice. This text is now proposed anew as a programme of life for the faithful who are beginning their working day and relations with their neighbour. It is a programme of "loyalty and of justice" (cf. v. 1), which is expressed in two great moral paths.

2. The first is called the way "of the blameless" and aims at exalting personal choices in life, made with an "integrity of heart", that is, with a perfectly clear conscience (cf. v. 2).

On the one hand, there are positive remarks about the great moral virtues that brighten the "house", that is, the family of the just man: the wisdom that helps us understand and judge properly; the innocence that is purity of heart and of life; and lastly, the integrity of conscience that tolerates no compromise with evil.

On the other hand, the Psalmist introduces a negative task. This is the struggle against every form of wickedness and injustice, in order to keep his own house and his own decisions free of every perversion of the moral order (cf. vv. 3-4).

As St Basil, a great Father of the Eastern Church, writes in his work *De Baptismo*, "Not even the

momentary pleasure that contaminates thought should trouble the one who is mourned with Christ in a death like his" (*Opere Ascetiche*, Turin 1980, p. 548).

3. The second path unfolds in the last part of the Psalm (cf. vv. 5-8) and explains the importance of the most typically public and social talents. In this case too are listed the essential references for a life that is set on rejecting evil with force and determination.

First of all, [there is] the fight against slander and spying in secret, a fundamental commitment in a society with an oral tradition that gave special importance to the function of words in interpersonal relations. The king, who also acts as judge, announces that he will use the utmost severity in this fight: he will "destroy" the slanderer (cf. v. 5). Then he rejects all arrogance and haughtiness; he spurns the company and counsel of those who always practise deceit and utter lies. Lastly, the king declares the way in which he wants to choose the "people who serve him" (cf. v. 6), that is, his ministers. He will be careful to choose them from among the "faithful in the land". He wants to surround himself with people of integrity and to avoid contact with "those who practise deceit" (cf. v. 7).

4. The last verse of the Psalm is particularly forceful. It can make the Christian reader uncomfortable, for it proclaims destruction: "Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land, cutting off the evildoers from the city of the Lord" (v. 8). It is important, however, to remember one thing: the person speaking these words is not just any individual but a king, the supreme authority responsible for justice in the land. In this sentence he expresses, with exaggeration, his implacable commitment to fight crime, which is only right and is shared by all who have civil authority.

Of course, it is not up to every citizen to mete out punishment! If, therefore, individual members of the faithful wish to apply this sentence of the Psalm to themselves, they must do so by analogy, that is, by deciding to uproot *from their own hearts and conduct*, every morning, the evil sown by corruption and violence, by perversion and wickedness, as well as by every form of selfishness and injustice.

5. Let us end our meditation by returning to the first verse of the Psalm: "I will sing of loyalty and of justice..." (v. 1). In his *Comments on the Psalms*, an ancient Christian author, Eusebius of Caesarea, stresses the primacy of mercy over justice, albeit necessary: "I will sing of your mercy and your judgment, showing your usual approach: not to judge first and then to have mercy, but first to have mercy and then to judge and pass sentences with clemency and compassion. "Thus treating my neighbour with mercy and discretion, I dare to come close to sing you psalms of praise. Conscious, therefore, that we must act like this, I keep my paths immaculate and innocent, convinced that in this way, through good works, my songs of praise will be pleasing to you" (*PG* 23, 1241).

To the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors

I am pleased to welcome the many English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience, especially those from England, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Korea, Japan, Canada and the United States. My special greeting goes to the group of Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhists from Japan. I also thank the Korean choir for its song. Upon all of you I invoke God's abundant blessings of joy and peace.

Feast of St Joseph the Worker

Tomorrow is the first day of May, the month dedicated to Our Lady. It begins with the Feast of St Joseph the Worker. Today let us entrust in particular the world of work to the Virgin Most Holy, and especially to her chaste husband, Joseph. May he, who was familiar with the efforts of daily life, be an example and support to all those who provide through their activity for the needs of their family and of the entire human community.

To young people, the sick and newly-weds

Finally, my thoughts turn to the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newly-weds*. May the risen Lord fill the hearts of each one of you with his love, dear *young people*, so that you may be ready to follow him with enthusiasm; may he sustain you, dear *sick people*, so that you may be prepared to accept with serenity the daily burden of suffering, and guide you, dear *newly-weds*, so that your family may grow in holiness, following the model of the Holy Family.