

THE SEVEN PENITENTIAL PSALMS:

Psalms 6, 31[32], 37[38], 50[51], 101[102], 129[130] and 142[143]



The Seven Penitential Psalms have long been regarded as David's lamentations of repentance for his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah, and for his other sins. While the Seven Penitential Psalms are sometimes associated with the Seven Deadly Sins, they also form a kind of spiritual ladder. Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly (1351-1420) for example, assigns successive virtues to embrace with each psalm - fear of punishment (6) sorrow for sin, then confession and remission (32) hope of grace, then more fear, followed by hope again (38) love of purity, mercy bestowed (51) longing for heaven (102) distrust of your own strength and confidence in divine mercy (130) and joy (143).

By order of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), these prayers are to be prayed during the days of Lent. If they can not be said on each day of the Season, they can at least be prayed on Lenten Fridays (or one could pray one prayer on each of the 7 Fridays of Lent). One kneels when praying these Psalms, begins and ends with a short antiphon, and recites a Gloria Patri in between.

ANTIPHON

Remember, not O Lord our or our parents' offences: neither take vengeance of our sins.

Psalm 6

- 2 O Lord, do not reprove me in Thy wrath, nor in Thy anger chastise me.
- 3 Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am weak, heal me, Lord, for my body is in torment.
- 4 And my soul is greatly troubled, but Thou, O Lord, how long?
- 5 Turn to me, O Lord, and deliver my soul; save me on account of Thy mercy.
- 6 For who amongst the dead remembers Thee, who of the dead will tell of Thee?
- 7 I have suffered and wept, every night have I washed my bed and drenched my blanket with my tears.
- 8 My eyes are filled with grief, I have grown feeble in the midst of my enemies.
- 9 Leave me, all you who do evil, for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.
- 10 The Lord has heard my appeal, the Lord has accepted my prayer.
- 11 May my enemies be put to shame and come to ruin. May they be turned away and be swiftly put to shame.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Psalm 31

- 1b Blessed is he whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.
- 2 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile.
- 3 Because I was silent my bones wasted away, as I cried out all day.
- 4 For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: I am twisted in my affliction whilst the thorn is fastened upon me.
- 5 I have acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my guilt I have not concealed.

- 5b I said "I will confess my injustice against myself to the Lord:" and
Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin.
- 6 For this shall every one that is holy pray to Thee in due time.
- 6a Though in a flood of many waters, they shall not reach him.
- 7 Thou art my refuge, from the tribulation which surrounds me: my
joy, deliver me from those surrounding me.
- 8 I will give thee understanding, and I will instruct thee in the way in
which thou shalt walk: I will fix my eyes upon thee.
- 9 Do not become like the horse and the mule, who have no
understanding.
- 9a With bit and bridle bind them fast, else they will not come near to
thee.
- 10 Many are the sorrows of the sinner, but mercy shall surround him
that hopeth in the Lord.
- 11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye just, and glory, all ye of
righteous heart.

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Psalm 37

- 2 O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy furor; nor chastise me in Thy wrath.
- 3 For thy arrows are fastened in me: and Thy hand hath descended
upon me.
- 4 There is no health in my flesh in the face of Thy wrath: there is no
peace for my bones in the face of my sins.
- 5 For my iniquities are gone over my head: and are a heavy burden too
heavy to bear.
- 6 My wounds are putrid and corrupt, in the face of my foolishness.
- 7 I am miserable and am bowed down: all the day long I walked in
sadness .
- 8 For my insides are filled with mocking; and there is no health in my
flesh.
- 9 Greatly am I afflicted and humbled: I roared with the groaning of my
heart.
- 10 Lord, before Thee are all my desires, and my groaning is not hidden
from Thee.

- 11 My heart is troubled, my strength hath left me, and the light of my eyes themselves is not with me.
- 12 My friends and my neighbors have drawn near me and stood against me.
- 12a And those who were near me stood afar:
- 13 They laid snares, those who sought my soul.
- 13a And they that sought evil for me said wicked things, all day long they planned deceitful things.
- 14 But I, as a deaf man, heard not: and as a dumb man not opening his mouth.
- 15 And I became like one that heareth not: and that hath no reproofs in his mouth.
- 16 For in Thee, O Lord, have I hoped: Thou wilt hear me, O Lord my God.
- 17 For I said, "May my enemies never rejoice over me: when my feet stumble, they speak great things against me."
- 18 For I am ready for the whip: and my sorrow is continually before me.
- 19 For I will declare my iniquity: and I will be sorry for my sin.
- 20 But my enemies live, and are stronger than I, and they that hate me wrongfully multiply.
- 21 They that render evil for good, have humiliated me, because I followed goodness.
- 22 Forsake me not, O Lord, my God, depart not from me.
- 23 Hasten unto my help, O Lord, God of my salvation.

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Psalm 50

“Miserére”

- 3 Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies: blot out my iniquity.
- 4 Wash me from my iniquity; and cleanse me of my sin.
- 5 For I acknowledge my iniquity, and my sin is always before me.

- 6 Against Thee alone have I sinned and done evil in Thy sight; that
Thou mayest be justified in Thy sentence and mayest overcome
when judged.
- 7 For behold, I was conceived in sin, and in sin my mother conceived
me;
- 8 For behold, Thou hast loved truth, and the uncertain and hidden
things of Thy wisdom Thou hast shown me.
- 9 Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed, Thou
shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.
- 10 Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness, and the bones Thou
hath crushed shall rejoice.
- 11 Turn away Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.
- 12 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit
within me.
- 13 Cast me not from Thy presence, and take not Thy holy spirit from
me.
- 14 Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and strengthen me with
Thy spirit.
- 15 I will teach the unjust Thy ways, and the wicked shall be converted
to Thee.
- 16 Deliver me from blood guilt, O God, the God of my salvation , and
my tongue shall extol Thy justice.
- 17 Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall declare Thy
praise.
- 18 For if Thou didst desire sacrifice, I would have indeed given it, with
a burnt offering Thou art not pleased.
- 19 A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit, a contrite and humbled
heart, O God, Thou shalt not despise.
- 20 Deal favorably, O Lord, in Thy good will with Sion that the walls of
Jerusalem may be built up.
- 21 Then shalt Thou accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations and whole
burnt offerings, then shall they lay calves upon Thy altar.

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Psalm 101

- 2 Hear, O Lord, my prayer: and let my cry come to Thee.
3 Hide not Thy face from me: in the day of my distress, incline Thy ear to me.
3b On the day I call upon Thee, hear me speedily.
4 For my days have vanished like smoke, and my bones burn like dry wood in a fire.
5 My heart is dried up and withered like grass: and so I have forgotten to eat my bread.
6 Because of my groaning, my bones cleave to my flesh.
7 I am like a pelican in the desert: I am like a night owl among the ruins.
8 I kept awake, and am like a lone sparrow on the housetop.
9 All day my enemies reviled me: in their rage against me they made a curse of me.
10 For I eat ashes like bread, and mingle my drink with tears.
11 Because of Thy anger and indignation: having lifted me up, Thou hast then cast me down.
12 My days are like a lengthening shadow, and I have withered like grass.
13 But thou, O Lord, endurest for ever: and Thy memorial for generations and generations.
14 Thou shalt arise and have mercy on Sion, for it is time to be merciful, for the appointed time has come.
15 For her stones have pleased Thy servants: and her dust moves them to pity.
16 All the Gentiles shall fear Thy name, O Lord, and all the kings of the earth Thy glory.
17 For the Lord hath built up Sion: and He shall be seen in His glory.
18 He hath regarded the prayer of the humble: and he hath not despised their prayer.
19 Let these things be written for the next generation: and the people that shall be created will praise the Lord:
20 For he hath looked down from his sanctuary on high: from heaven the Lord hath looked upon the earth,
21 that he might hear the groans of those imprisoned that he might release the children of the dead:
22 That they may declare the name of the Lord in Sion: and His praise in Jerusalem;

23 when the people assemble together, and kings, that they may serve
the Lord.
24 He hath broken my strength in the way, He hath cut short my days.
25 I shall say: "My God take me not away in the midst of my days: Thy
years are for generations and generations.
26 In the beginning, O Lord, Thou foundedst the earth: and the
heavens are the works of thy hands.
27 They shall perish but Thou shalt remain: and all of them shall grow
old like a garment:
27b And like clothing Thou shalt change them, and they shall be
changed.
28 But Thou art always the same, and Thy years have no end.
29 The children of Thy servants shall abide and their offspring shall be
established in Thy presence.

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Psalm 129

“De Profundis”

1 Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord: Lord hear my
voice.
2 Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.
3 If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?
4 But there is forgiveness with Thee: because of Thy law I wait for
Thee, O Lord.
5 My soul waiteth on His word: my soul hopeth in the Lord.
6 From the morning watch even until night let Israel hope in the Lord:
7 For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plentiful
redemption.
8 And He shall redeem Israel, from all their iniquities.

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Psalm 142

- 1b Hear, O Lord, my prayer, give ear to my supplication in Thy truth:
hear me in Thy justice.
- 2 And enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for no one living
shall be justified in Thy sight.
- 3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul: he hath ground my life into
the earth.
- 3b He hath made me dwell in darkness as the dead of old.
- 4 And my spirit is in anguish within me: my heart within me is
troubled.
- 5 I remembered the days of old, I meditated on all Thy works: upon
the works of Thy hands I pondered.
- 6 I stretched forth my hands to Thee: my soul is as earth without water
unto Thee.
- 7 Hear me speedily, O Lord: my spirit hath fainted away.
- 7b Turn not away Thy face from me, lest I be like those that go down
into the pit.
- 8 Cause me to hear Thy mercy in the morning; for in Thee have I
hoped.
- 8b Make the way known to me, wherein I should walk: for I have lifted
up my soul to Thee.
- 9 Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord, to Thee have I fled.
- 10 Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God.
- 10b Thy good spirit shall lead me into the right land:
- 11 for Thy name's sake, O Lord, Thou wilt give me life in Thy justice.
- 11b Thou shalt bring my soul out of trouble.
- 12 And in Thy mercy Thou wilt destroy my enemies.
- 12b And Thou wilt cut off all that afflict my soul: for I am Thy servant.

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