

Session 2: Permission to Lament

WHAT WE FOUND

- By most counts, laments are the largest single category of psalms. God's own prayer book is full of inspired complaint.
- Lament has an anatomy: address, complaint, petition, and usually a turn to trust. Psalm 13 turns; nothing changed but the direction of the gaze.
- Psalm 22:1-11 braids complaint and creed together and refuses to drop either one.
- Psalm 88 never turns; its last word is darkness, and it is still holy Scripture, assigned to Friday Night Prayer in the Church's ordinary weekly cycle. Verse 1 hides its miracle: the man in the dark is still crying out *before you*. Lament keeps the address line.
- The wilderness grumbling God condemned (Exodus 16) ran the other way: pressed against Moses and Aaron, and so against the LORD, rewriting their history and moving away from him. The address line is the clearest sign of the difference, though not the whole of it.
- Even the Bible's book-length funeral hides hope at its exact center: the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases (Lamentations 3:21-24).

THREE VOICES WORTH KEEPING

St. Athanasius (Letter to Marcellinus, in summary): the Psalms mirror the soul; whoever prays them finds his own heart there, and prays the words as his own. The laments were written for your dark days too.

St. John of the Cross (The Dark Night, in summary): not every darkness in prayer is God's absence; some darkness is God's nearness, purifying faith of its dependence on feelings.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux (Story of a Soul, in summary): through her final trial of faith, when heaven felt closed, she kept making acts of faith she could not feel. She persevered to the end, and the Church canonized her.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Pray your written lament line once each morning. Just the line. Keep the address.
2. On Friday night, pray Night Prayer (Compline), or simply Psalm 88, with the whole Church.
3. When someone shares something hard, do not supply the turn for them: no at least. Let their verse 18 stand.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit."

Psalm 34:18

Before next session: Read Job 1-2. And if your sealed sheet from Week 1 is still at home, bring it next week.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 2585-2589, 2629-2631, 1174-1178