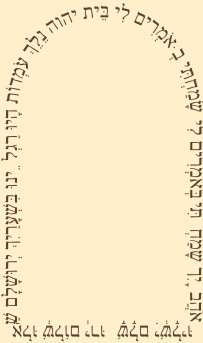




THE PSALMS:  
A DOORWAY TO  
JEWISH-CATHOLIC  
♦ DIALOGUE ♦



Prepared by:

THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE  
OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

—  
CANADIAN RABBINIC CAUCUS

בית ירושה



# THE PSALMS: A DOORWAY TO JEWISH–CATHOLIC DIALOGUE

**I**N AN IMPORTANT MOVE, both historically and theologically, the Second Vatican Council undertook to address the relationship between Catholics and Jews in the document “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” (*Nostra Aetate*, 1965). In the last two millennia, hatred, persecutions, and displays of anti-Semitism have often and tragically defined the relations between Jews and Catholics. This document addressed the spiritual and theological connection of the two religions and taught that

*Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues. (Nostra Aetate, 4)*

In light of this encouragement, in 2015 the Canadian Rabbinic Caucus invited the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops to explore initiating a specific dialogue to bring together representatives of the Catholic and Jewish communities. The intent was to engage in discussions as religious leaders and to exchange religious perspectives between our traditions; to discuss matters of current relevance (such as faith in the public square, religious accommodation) in a respectful and constructive manner; and to identify opportunities for joint initiatives to strengthen relations between representative organizations and community members.

With the enthusiastic endorsement of the Bishops and after a period of planning, the Catholic–Jewish National Dialogue was established in the 50th anniversary year of *Nostra Aetate* with gratitude to God and blessed hope. Six persons selected by each organization have attended meetings of the Dialogue, which are usually held twice a year. A combination of lay people and clergy, theologians and rabbis, has ensured a mix of perspectives.

In the last five years, while delving into historic issues and current questions, the members of the Dialogue have also been deeply enriched by the time devoted in each gathering to the study of a psalm from both traditions. This presentation of a selection of these reflections is an effort

to share with the wider community the fruits of this study. Since the outset of this Dialogue, our mutual and heartfelt desire has been to support efforts to communicate the outcome of our conversations with synagogues and parishes and hence expand its effectiveness.

It is a pleasure on behalf of the Catholic–Jewish National Dialogue to offer these teachings and reflections, which we hope will be a blessing and an invitation to dialogue.



*“Then those who revered the LORD  
spoke with one another.*

*The LORD took note and listened.”*

–Malachi 3:16



## HOW WE STUDY THE PSALMS IN OUR DIALOGUE

**DURING ONE OF OUR FIRST MEETINGS**, as we prepared the agenda of our next gathering, someone suggested that we include the study of a psalm in our program. Since the book of Psalms is shared by Jews and Catholics and is often used in prayer in both traditions, it was thought that this might be a way to enter into a more ‘existential’ dialogue where we could speak not only about our ways of thinking of faith, but also our ways of living our faith.

At the next meeting, two members who had prepared a brief commentary gave their presentations. They explained how the selected psalm is prayed in their respective traditions and what it means for them. Time for open discussion then gave all members the opportunity to ask questions of each other, to tell of their experiences with that particular psalm, and to share further theological and spiritual insights around it. One member raised the issue of music, inquiring as to how the psalms are sung in our homes, synagogues, and churches. We ended up listening to each other sing the psalm: one group sang in Hebrew, the other in French. It turned out to be a high point in our conversation that day.

Since then, we have endeavoured to continue this practice at each of our meetings. We try to choose a psalm connected to the overall theme of that day’s dialogue, which allows us to ground our dialogue in our relationship with God and in the lives of our communities. Our sharing reveals both our differences in approach as well as our common roots in the prayer experience of the biblical people of Israel.

## WHAT ARE THE PSALMS?

**WHEN THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES** were translated into Greek a few hundred years before the Common Era, the book known in Hebrew as *Tehillim* (Praises) was given the title of *Psalmoi* (Hymns), from which is derived the English word “psalm.”

This book contains 150 poems or hymns that would have been used for personal or communal prayer in ancient Israel. Jewish tradition attributes most of the psalms to King David. Most biblical scholars today recognize that

these works were composed by various Jewish writers over a number of centuries.

They encompass a wide range of human sentiments and include prayers of lamentation and supplication, petition and thanksgiving, contemplation and adoration. They vary in length, in style, and in form. Jews and Christians cherish the psalms, study them, and pray them. Let us look at how each tradition approaches these sacred texts.

## THE PSALMS IN JEWISH LIFE

**THE TALMUD—THE ANCIENT SOURCE** of Jewish wisdom—says that one “who recites ‘A Psalm of David’ (Ps 145) three times daily is assured of a place in the World-to-Come.” The rabbis understood the power of regular, scheduled recitation of psalms in enabling people to find the words, emotions, and space for connection with God. Investing time in such spiritual pursuit in this World bears fruit in the World-to-Come.

Psalms are an integral part of the Jewish ritual identity, in particular in the areas of liturgy, religious ceremonies, and personal petitions.

Jewish liturgy is based on the structure of offerings in Jerusalem’s Holy Temple; in the two millennia since the Temple’s destruction, daily Jewish prayers now include commemorations of the daily psalms recited by the Levites in the course of their sacred service. Additionally, the weekday morning service includes at least ten psalms scattered throughout the prayer service, the bulk of which focus on praise of God (Pss 145–150). Additional psalms are recited on the Sabbath and festivals.

Every Friday night, the service of “Welcoming the Sabbath” is comprised entirely of psalms (Pss 92–99, and 29). In the course of a week, one who prays the standard Jewish liturgy will recite more than 100 psalms, with even more included on holidays or other special occasions.

Psalms also play a central role in religious ceremonies. Ashkenazi Jewish funeral rites will often include

Psalms 1, 15, 23, and/or 121, while Sephardic custom recites the series of psalms commonly associated with Friday night prayers (Pss 92–99). Psalm 23 is often recited as the deceased is escorted, and Psalm 91 is recited at the burial. Psalms accompany other life-cycle rituals, including baby namings, unveilings, and weddings. At a Jewish wedding, the iconic ritual of a groom's breaking a glass is accompanied by the words of Psalm 137: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem...."

In times when urgent divine intervention is requested, Jewish tradition turns to the psalms. In a scenario of war, famine, or personal illness, a community might choose to engage in a responsive recitation of Psalm 121 ("I lift my eyes unto the mountains") or Psalm 130 ("From the depths I cry out to you, O Lord"). When praying for a person's health, some have the custom of turning to Psalm 119—the lengthiest psalm—which is written in an acrostic. Those verses that begin with the letters of the sick individual's name will be read, as an omen for healing. In many communities, there exists a "Tehillim [Psalms] Group," a virtual group whose members undertake to collectively recite the entire book of Psalms each day. These groups often distribute names of those in need of prayer, so that an entire community reads Psalms while focusing on the well-being of those who might be healing from a grave illness, recovering from a serious surgery, wanting to find a spouse, or experiencing fertility challenges.

Finally, notice that small old woman sitting quietly on that bus in Jerusalem. You'll notice her lips are silently moving as she hunches over a small book, immersed in prayer, oblivious to the world around her. Of course, she is reciting Psalms, praying for her family and her community, immersed in sanctity while others go about their mundane routines.

## THE PSALMS IN CATHOLIC LIFE

**JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES**, being devout Jews, grew up learning and praying the psalms. Matthew's Gospel recounts how, at the Last Supper, they prayed the Passover psalms together before heading to the Garden of Gethsemane. The same Gospel reports that Jesus' last words on the Cross were the opening line of Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The Acts of the Apostles show the early Christians in Jerusalem faithful to Temple worship, where the psalms were regularly sung.

What is more, the book of Psalms became one of the main sources for understanding the life and ministry of Jesus. New Testament writers quote this book or refer to it more than 400 times! One can hardly read a page of the New Testament without coming upon a reference to the psalms.

Small wonder that these prayers were integrated into the early Church's worship. Still today, psalms are used in the liturgy and provide the vocabulary and thought patterns that shape our communal prayer. This is most evident in the Divine Office, the cycle of prayers that are the staple of daily life in monasteries, convents, and rectories throughout the Catholic Church. Monks, priests, and religious are bound to this cycle that sees them pray through the 150 psalms every month. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), lay men and women have been encouraged to join in this practice, for the Divine Office is the prayer of the whole Church.

The Liturgy of the Word at Mass nearly always proposes a psalm to be sung by the assembly after the first reading, usually in a responsorial form. This means that an antiphon (a refrain) is repeated by the assembly after a cantor sings each strophe of the psalm. Some psalms have thus become closely linked to the liturgy to which they are assigned: for example, Psalm 96 with Christmas, Psalm 51 with Ash Wednesday, Psalm 22 for Good Friday, and Psalm 118 for Easter.

Though the psalms are rarely sung in family settings, pious Catholics tend to develop a particular attachment to a personal selection of psalms to which they return again and again.

## SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN OUR APPROACHES TO THE PSALMS

**THIS EMPOWERING VERSE** of Psalm 118 provides the faithful with hope in our disempowered moments: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.” What, however, is the symbolism of this rejected stone? Whereas a Catholic understands this verse as referring to Jesus—who was rejected and condemned by some of those around him—Jewish tradition of scriptural exegesis provides a fundamentally different approach. For example, the 12th-century Jewish sage Ibn Ezra explains that the verse refers to the life of King David, traditionally assumed to be the author of Psalms, who was first mocked by the enemies he later conquered. Ibn Ezra also explains that this verse carries prophetic inspiration for the exiled Jew, rejected among the nations of the world, who will one day be redeemed.

This difference in interpretive tradition highlights a fundamental difference in our two religions’ understanding of Psalms: whereas Jews read the Psalms in the context of King David’s life as well as prophetically to understand the overall predicament of the Jewish people, Catholics often read the Psalms through the lens of Jesus and interpret the verses in light of who Catholics proclaim Jesus to be.

Verses of the Psalms were used throughout the New Testament to explain the teachings of Jesus. It seems that, almost in parallel, the rabbis institutionalized the inclusion of entire chapters and select verses of Psalms as part of the daily prayer rituals. Remarkably, throughout the centuries Jews and Catholic have been praying the same psalms, often at the same time (Easter and Passover each feature readings of the same Psalm 118, for example).

We may have a different understanding of the words. But we use the psalms in similar ways—to give voice to our emotions, in prayer and as part of ritual—both personally and communally.

“THE STONE THAT THE BUILDERS  
REJECTED HAS BECOME THE  
CHIEF CORNERSTONE.”

—PSALM 118:22



# בְּשַׁעֲרֶיךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם:

יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר שְׁלֵמָה יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר שְׁלֵמָה יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר שְׁלֵמָה יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר שְׁלֵמָה  
יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר שְׁלֵמָה יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר שְׁלֵמָה יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר שְׁלֵמָה יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר שְׁלֵמָה  
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WITHIN YOUR GATES  
○ JERUSALEM

# בְּשַׁעַר יְרוּשָׁלַם WITHIN YOUR GATES



**GOING UP TO JERUSALEM (ALIYAH)** for the three pilgrimage festivals is a central ideal in biblical life. The 15 psalms titled “Songs of Ascent” are associated by later rabbinic tradition with the 15 steps ascending to the court of the Temple.

*Aliyah* also refers to the return to the Land of Promise and, according to the Jewish canonization of Scripture, is the final word of the Bible (2 Chronicles 36:23). This concept also resonates in contemporary history through the *Aliyah* of Jews from around the world to the State of Israel.

Jerusalem has been the focus of yearning and awe for the Jewish people. This city serves as the orientation for worship, is invoked in daily prayer and evokes personal spiritual feelings as well as national history and the aspiration of the Jewish people to be “knit together.”

This psalm probably reflects the experience of an individual returning from outside the Land of Israel, recalling earlier ancestral pilgrimages when “our feet stood inside your gates.” The personal and national are merged, just as faithful Jews often situate individual life experiences within the larger narrative of the Jewish people. The “sh” sound is repeated in the Hebrew words of *Yerushalayim*/Jerusalem and *shalom*/peace. The city and the aspiration are joined in a vision and hope for the “City of Peace.”



**PSALM 122 IS A CANTICLE OF ZION** praising the holy city as the source of unity, harmony, and peace. As a “Song of Ascent” that describes a joyful procession, it can also be sung at pilgrimages or for processions.

The Christian reinterpretation touches two levels:

First, the earthly Jerusalem corresponds to the Church, the house of all the baptized, where they worship together as brothers and sisters. This is why the psalm is recited on a Sunday or for the dedication of a church. As for the earthly Jerusalem, the same gifts of unity, harmony, and peace are asked for the Church. Then, with reference to the book of Revelation (chapters 21–22), a New Jerusalem, which corresponds to Heaven or Paradise, is proposed to the believers’ hope and prayer. In this context, the faithful walk with joy towards the fullness of the kingdom of God.

Second, from the symbolic feminine connotation of city walls as a woman’s protective womb, Psalm 122 has been reread in light of the Blessed Virgin Mary, image of mother Church. The same symbolic meaning can be seen in the book of Jonah (chapter 2, with the big fish) or mother earth in Job 1:21 (my mother’s womb/the earth’s womb). Because Psalm 122 is used for the Blessed Virgin Mary, it is also used on the feasts of virgins or consecrated women who dedicated themselves totally to Christ.

## Psalm 122

*<sup>1</sup>I was glad when they said to me,  
Let us go to the  
house of the LORD!*

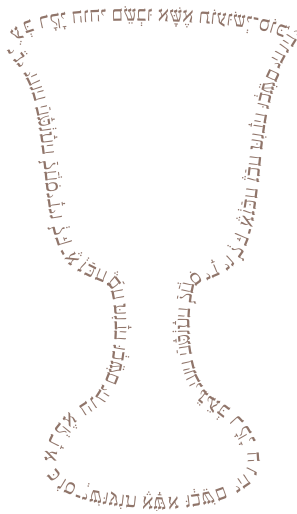
*<sup>2</sup>Our feet are standing  
within your gates, O Jerusalem.*

*<sup>6</sup>Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:  
“May they prosper who love you.”*

<sup>1</sup> שְׂמַחְתִּי בְּאִמְרֵי לַיהוָה  
 בֵּית יְהוָה נִלְוֶה:  
<sup>2</sup> עֲמֻדוֹת הָיוּ רַגְלֵינוּ  
 בְּשַׁעְרֶיהָ: רֹוּשָׁלַם  
<sup>6</sup> שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם  
 שְׁלֵוֵי אַהֲבָהּ:



# כּוֹס־יְשׁוּעוֹת אֶשָּׂא



I WILL LIFT UP THE CUP  
OF SALVATION



# I WILL LIFT UP THE CUP OF SALVATION



**THIS PSALM OF THANKSGIVING** is a statement of love and faith in God's saving power. It appears to be a statement of gratitude by a person who has returned from the Babylonian exile and has experienced a sense of redemption from personal and national despair.

Life is an opportunity to dwell in the Divine presence. Although death is painful for the God of life, the psalmist has hope and reassurance of an enduring relationship. Although the author cannot truly repay the Holy One for all of God's gifts, the poet will raise a "cup of salvation," perhaps a wine libation, to accompany the thanksgiving offering.

The invocation of God's Name expresses an intimate relationship with the Holy One. Yet the fulfillment of this vow is public, "in the midst of Jerusalem." To this day, a blessing of thanksgiving is publicly recited at the Torah by an individual who has recovered from illness or avoided danger. Jews also chant this psalm publicly as part of the *Hallel*, the liturgy of praise, recited on the three pilgrimage festivals: *Pesach* (Passover), *Shavuot* (Weeks or Pentecost), and *Sukkot* (Tents or Booths).

During the Saturday evening service of *havdalah*, which distinguishes the Sabbath from the week to come, Jews raise "the cup of deliverance," declaring trust and hope as they leave the sanctity and security of Shabbat and enter the uncertainty of the week.

**BECAUSE THE CATHOLIC LITURGY** follows the Latin translation of the Psalms (the Vulgate), Psalm 116 is recited as two poems: Psalm 114 (= Ps 116:1-9) and Psalm 115 (= Ps 116:10-19).



The first part of Psalm 116 (= Ps 114 in the Vulgate) is an individual lamentation recited as a supplication, sometimes on the feast of martyrs.

The second part of Psalm 116 (= Ps 115 in the Vulgate) is a thanksgiving psalm usually recited at the end of Morning Prayer in a movement of amazement before God's works.

In Christian reinterpretation, some verses received a new meaning. The whole of Psalm 116, and especially its second part (verses 10-19), is seen as referring to the martyrs whose "death is precious/costly in the LORD's sight" (verse 15).

Verses 13 and 17 have been given a Eucharistic interpretation. Even though the Catholic tradition gave much more importance to the Body of Christ than to his Blood, in verse 13 the "cup of salvation" was interpreted in light of this Sacrament. The reference in verse 17 to a "sacrifice of thanksgiving" also supported this theology of the "Eucharistic sacrifice." In Catholic theology, Eucharist is defined as an "unbloody sacrifice"—hence the analogy. The Greek word "Eucharist" means "thanksgiving." Instead of offering sacrifices, the believer makes their life a "sacrifice of praise."

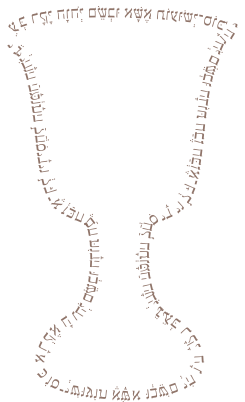
**Psalm 116**

*<sup>13</sup>I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.*

*<sup>15</sup>Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones.*

*<sup>17</sup>I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the LORD.*

כּוֹס יְשׁוּעוֹת אֶשָּׂא <sup>13</sup>  
וּבְשֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא:  
יְקָר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה <sup>15</sup>  
הַמּוֹתָה לְחַסִּידָיו:  
לְךָ־אֲזַבֵּחַ זְבַח תּוֹדָה <sup>17</sup>  
וּבְשֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא:





# יהוה רעי לא אֶחָסֶה

## THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD



**ALTHOUGH TALMUDIC TRADITION** ascribes the authorship of the Psalms to King David, the poet-author probably reflects a different time period: a desire to return to the Land of Israel from Babylonian exile. Intensely personal pronouns are used seventeen times, yet this psalm also has a promise of divine care for a people that has faced exile and persecution.

In four Hebrew words, with great brevity, the poet portrays himself as a lamb cared for by a watchful shepherd, so that even in “a valley of deepest darkness ... you are with me.” Although the shepherd and sheep metaphor usually refers to God and the flock/folk of Israel, Moses and David were shepherds who served as leaders whose guidance endures.

The poet uses a banquet metaphor to emphasize another aspect of divine care for the people of Israel. The Holy One sustains the psalmist and the people in a new Exodus (from Babylonia) that will bring them back to the Temple, the House of the Eternal.

Because the “goodness and steadfast love/mercy” of God was understood as extending to the rebirth of a people and to individual eternal life, this psalm is recited near the close of the Sabbath, as well as at Jewish funeral and memorial services.



**PSALM 23 IS A PSALM OF TRUST** and is recited as such by Catholics, mostly on Sundays, at funerals (see verse 4 about “walking through the shadow of death”), or at the end of the day, in some communities, at the Office of Compline.

### Psalm 23

*<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd,  
I shall not want.*

*<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.*

*<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall  
follow me all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of  
the LORD my whole life long.*

מְזֻמּוֹר לַדָּוָד יְהוָה רֵעִי לֹא אֶחָסֶה:<sup>1</sup>  
תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי וּשְׁלַחַן נִגְדַּ צָרָי<sup>5</sup>  
דִּשְׁנַת בְּשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי כֹּסֵי רוּיָה:<sup>6</sup>  
אֶךְ טוֹב וַחֲסֵד יְיָדְפוּנֵי כָּל־יָמֵי חַיִּי  
וּשְׁבֹתֵי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה לְאָרְךָ יָמַיִם:

Since Jesus presented himself as the Good Shepherd in the Gospel of John, Psalm 23:1-4 is read from that perspective. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me” (John 10:11,14). This is in line with Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34, where God presents himself as a shepherd for his people.

For the Christian reading, Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd who makes believers lie down in grassy meadows, which is interpreted as the kingdom of God; he not only protects them, but even gives his own life for their sake.

Verse 5, which presents the image of a table and anointing with oil, has been reinterpreted in light of the Sacraments of Eucharist, Confirmation, and Holy Orders (Ordination). Eucharist is the table where Christ’s Body and Blood are offered to feed the faithful. At Confirmation, the baptized person is consecrated to God by anointing. At Ordination, a man is consecrated priest by anointing for the service of the Gospel.



# יֵחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יְהוָה

מִמְצַמְקִים קָרְאתִיךָ יְהוָה פִּי יִצְמַח לִי  
וְיִשְׁמַח לִי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה  
בְּעַד תְּהַדָּאֵת לְעַמּוֹךָ וְלְעַמּוֹתָא  
בְּעַד מַלְאָכְךָ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה  
בְּעַד מַלְאָכְךָ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה

○ ISRAEL  
HOPE IN THE LORD!

# ISRAEL

## HOPE IN THE LORD!



**THIS PSALM OF ASCENTS** begins “from the depths” of awareness of sin and personal loneliness. The poet, trembling with spiritual angst, offers a personal petition asking for divine forgiveness.

Awe and love are linked, as the writer recognizes that the capacity to lovingly forgive, rather than the power to punish, is what makes God awesome.

Anxious yet hopeful, uncertain yet faithful, the poet calls on God to “redeem,” to forgive as a gift of loving *hesed*. *hesed*, one of the attributes of God, is an expression of covenantal faithfulness and graciousness, sustaining people through personal crises and communal exile. Humans are called upon to emulate *hesed*—which is both an attitude and an action—in their relationships with other people.

The person and the people are told to be patient and persistent, to wait for the Eternal, for that waiting will be rewarded. This heart-rending psalm is recited during the Days of Awe between the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*). It is also chanted during times of distress, terror, and pandemic.



**THE FAMOUS DE PROFUNDIS** is a traditional psalm of supplication recited mainly on Friday, the day Jesus died. With Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, and 143, it is part of the seven penitential psalms. It is also

recited for the dead or for reconciliation or penance, since verses 3 and 4 focus on forgiveness of sins. The believer is aware of the depths to which their sins led, but is also aware of God’s mercy.

Because of the final verses (5–8) about trust and confidence in God, the psalm is also recited at the end of the day, at Compline. The faithful tell God again how sure they are that their trust and confidence in God is stronger than their sins. As the psalm itself says, no human could stand divine judgment based on strict justice (see verse 3).

Paradoxically, it is because of verses 7 and 8 that the *De profundis* is also recited at Christmas. These verses

present God’s mercy and abundance of “redemption,” intended in the Christian way of the salvation performed by Jesus Christ through his paschal mystery of death/resurrection. In Catholic theology, humans are believed to have been reduced to spiritual slavery through their decision to commit (original) sin; they were “bought back” (the Latin meaning of “redeemed”) by Jesus Christ as he died and rose from the dead on humanity’s behalf, gaining for us our liberty and life.

### Psalm 130

*<sup>1</sup>Out of the depths I cry to you,  
O LORD.*

*<sup>4</sup>But there is forgiveness with you,  
so that you may be revered.*

*<sup>7</sup>O Israel, hope in the LORD!  
For with the LORD  
there is steadfast love,  
and with him is great power  
to redeem.*

1 מִמְעַמְקִים קָרָאתִיךָ יְהוָה:  
 4 כִּי־עֲמִךָ הַסְּלִיחָה  
 לְמַעַן תִּתְּרָא:  
 7 יְיָ הֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי־הוֹדוֹ  
 כִּי־עִם־יְהוָה הַחֶסֶד  
 וְהַרְבֵּה עִמּוֹ פְדוּת:

מִמְעַמְקִים קָרָאתִיךָ יְהוָה כִּי־עִם־יְהוָה הַחֶסֶד וְהַרְבֵּה עִמּוֹ פְדוּת  
 כִּי־עֲמִךָ הַסְּלִיחָה לְמַעַן תִּתְּרָא  
 מִמְעַמְקִים קָרָאתִיךָ יְהוָה כִּי־עִם־יְהוָה הַחֶסֶד וְהַרְבֵּה עִמּוֹ פְדוּת

## HOPE IN THE LORD!

# CONCLUSION

Through shared prayer, discussion, and song, this national Jewish–Catholic Dialogue in Canada has deepened our appreciation of the Psalms and their centrality in the liturgical life of both the Jewish and Catholic traditions.

As our Dialogue evolved, we invited others to share in the richness of the Psalms as prayer cherished and held in common by each of our faith traditions. For example, the Dialogue sponsored a concert hosted at Kehillat Beth Israel synagogue in Ottawa entitled “Sing to the Lord a New Song”: The Psalms in the Jewish and Catholic Traditions. The evening was marked by choral music sung in Hebrew, French, English, and Latin, performed by the Notre Dame Cathedral Basilica choir and the Kehillat Beth Israel Congregation choir. The concert invitation was open to all faith traditions. Dialogue members shared how the Jewish and Catholic traditions pray with the Psalms in community prayer as well as personal prayer.

As the Dialogue continued to plumb the richness of the Psalms, our attention was captured by the voice of Psalm 130. To share this voice, Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto hosted a public event, coordinated by the Dialogue, that explored the theme of redemption in the Jewish and Catholic traditions through film, music, and sacred study. The evening included a screening of the film *Babette’s Feast*, a follow-up reflection on the film by both faith communities, and an original musical performance by the Temple Emanu-El Choir and the Holy Blossom Temple Singers entitled “Fierce as the Sea.”

Prayer, whether communal or personal, begins with the particularity of each person. These ancient prayers accompany us in moments of celebration, comfort us in sorrow, invite our questioning, and lift us up when all seems lost. Often, the text and passion of the Psalms bring voice to emotions beneath the threshold of awareness. They allow us to stand before God as we are and to rest in the assurance that the One who created us continues to accompany and sustain us through life’s journey. These timeless texts call both Jews and Catholics to praise and gratitude.

*“Let everything that breathes  
praise the LORD, Hallelujah!”*

—Psalm 150:6

## FOR FURTHER READING

*The Psalms: Translation and Commentary*, by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim, 1960, 1966, 1976, 1977, 1991, 1997).

*The Psalms for Our Lives: A Christian Reading Guide for Psalms 1–50, 51–100, 101–150* (3-volume series), by Archbishop Paul André Durocher (Ottawa: Novalis, 2017).

*The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary* by Robert Alter

*Our Haven and Our Strength: The Book of Psalms* by Martin Samuel Cohen

*Psalms with commentary (Israel Bible)* by Avi Baumol



## CANADIAN RABBINIC CAUCUS

Rabbi Reuben Joshua Poupko (co-chair)  
Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl  
Rabbi Yael Splansky  
Rabba Brown Scheier  
Dr. Adele Reinhartz  
Dr. Norman Tobias

## STAFF

Mr. Richard Marceau (CIJA)

## CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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Father Martin Moser, O.M.I.  
Father Hervé Tremblay, O.P.

## STAFF

Mr. Kyle Ferguson (CCCB)

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The Jewish translation of the excerpts of the psalms are from the Westminster Leningrad Codex.

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