

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 30, 2022
Year of Saint Joseph

“For thou, O Lord, art my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. . . Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent.” (Psalm 71:5, 9)

The Responsorial Psalm for our Mass today is taken, in part, from Psalm 71. The beauty of this Psalm may be expressed in the continued hope the psalmist possesses. It is a hope which focuses upon the help of God. A hope the psalmist displays despite his advanced age. It is a hope that you and I should foster within ourselves no matter our own age. Let us take a moment and reflect upon this hope in the Lord our God.

Growing up as a child when I did, there were many television programs we watched which later generations missed. One of these many programs was Mutual of Omaha’s “Wild Kingdom” which aired from 1963-1988 and was hosted by zoologist Marlin Perkins. Funny thing, I can still sing the Mutual of Omaha jingle which accompanied the show. I remember the great animals from distant lands whose lives were displayed upon my family’s television set. It is where I learned how the large predators hunt their prey. Why am I telling you this? For this reminds us of what the psalmist was thanking God for in Psalm 71 – His help in old age.

If you remember how large predators hunt, they do not attack the strong and swift. Most large predators look for an easy victim. They go after the vulnerable; the aged, injured, and young. The psalmist, seeing himself in one of these three categories, thanks God for protecting him. Might we inquire from whom or from what he praises God for this protection? I offer you this thought. It must be something more than a physical predator. As adults, we can use our intellect and lived experience to avoid many situations which could place us in harm’s way. We do this so very often we may not realize we are doing it. Honestly, why do we need God’s help when we can avoid certain places or situations, and in a time when either someone around us or ourselves may be carrying a certain “personal protection device?” What if the psalmist is thanking God for providing protection from an unseen predator who never rests, always on the prowl for prey? Dear family, both the psalmist and we need to thank God for providing us the many protections He does in our struggle against Satan and the demons.

We read in 1 Peter 5:8-9, *“Stay sober and alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, solid in your faith.”* As I have said prior, we have a relentless spiritual enemy in the Devil and his

legions whose hatred from us burns hotter than a million suns. Ever the opportunistic predators, they seek out the spiritually weak and feeble. Those who will succumb ever so quickly to their slightest temptations. They will be less likely to attack those whose spiritual lives are filled through obedience to God's commands. Those who, properly understood, are living in a state of grace. Remember, a life lived in a state of grace implies not living in mortal sin and actively working, through God's grace, to rid oneself of venial sin. Unlike the psalmist, we should consider ourselves more blessed and more thankful for we have much more given by God to assist us in remaining in a state of grace. We have the Bible, the teachings of the Catholic Church, the sacraments, and many sacramentals which all combine to assist us. We also have it within ourselves to offer daily sacrifices to strengthen our resolve to avoid those near occasions of sin which can both weaken and kill our relationship with God, creation, others, and ourselves. Today we join with the psalmist thanking God for His care and protection for we are the young, the old, the weak, and the infirm.