



LECTIO (reading): Psalm 85

¹ For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by the sons of Korah.

² Yahweh, you have been favorable to your land.

You have restored the fortunes of Jacob.

³ You have forgiven the iniquity of your people.

You have covered all their sin.

Selah.

⁴ You have taken away all your wrath.

You have turned from the fierceness of your anger.

⁵ Turn us, God of our salvation,
And cause your indignation toward us to cease.

⁶ Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you draw out your anger to all generations?

⁷ Won't you revive us again,
That your people may rejoice in you?

⁸ Show us your loving kindness, Yahweh.
Grant us your salvation.

⁹ I will hear what God, Yahweh, will speak,
For he will speak peace to his people, his saints;

But let them not turn again to folly.

¹⁰ Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,

That glory may dwell in our land.

¹¹ Mercy and truth meet together.
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

¹² Truth springs out of the earth.
Righteousness has looked down from heaven.

¹³ Yes, Yahweh will give that which is good.
Our land will yield its increase.

¹⁴ Righteousness goes before him,
And prepares the way for his steps.

MEDITATIO (explanation)

This psalm was created when the people of Israel returned from exile, and it was written for the choir leader of the sons of Korah, as the preface in verse one mentions. The sons of Korah were probably released from normal duties so that they could compose and sing hymns. They formed a craft of singers in the temple. Several psalms are in the name of the Korahites.

Psalm 85 can be divided into three sections, as shown in the text above.

- 2-4 The first verses look back on the past. To understand these verses, we should keep in mind the exile. In exile, the Jews had nothing left: no book, no temple, no liturgy. Thus, they had lost their God. When they were allowed to return to their homeland, they could exercise their religion again. The relationship between God and his people was restored. God has accepted his land (v. 2) and his people (v. 3), he removed the guilt, restrained his anger, and averted his wrath. These verses describe that the people return to God *and* that God returns to his people. It was God who initiated this return.
- 5-8 The second stanza turns to the present. Again, the theme is 'to return', although now this is understood in the sense of repentance. Here and now, everything is turning out to be different. The relationship between God and his people is broken. Based on the memory of the first part, God is asked to return and to not be angry anymore. They ask God to bring to life and help them. Once returned from exile, the people run the risk of ending up in the same situation as in the time of the exile. But now they have only themselves to blame. They pray to God in a strongly imperative: 'turn us', 'cause to cease', 'revive us', 'show us', 'grant us', etc.
- 9-14 In the third and final stanza, the psalm changes its tone. Now there is confidence about the future. When we listen to the word of God, God's help is to come, God will come back to his people. God will give good things, and the earth will bring forth fruit. The covenant is restored and the psalmist uses words from the relational sphere: "If mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other (v. 11) ... then the Lord will give that which is good, and our land will yield its increase" (v 13). The sky turns to earth, and earth to heaven. Heaven and earth are reconciled with each other (God dwells on earth, v. 10); heaven and earth touch each other: truth springs out of the earth, righteousness has looked down from heaven. Peace and justice, truth and faith: that is *shalom*, the overall harmony between God and people and between people.

As is often found, also this psalm makes use of *parallels*, in which the same thing is said twice, in a slightly different manner: honor and glory (v. 10), truth and justice (v. 12), the 'good' and fruit (v. 13). These are big words, but when "heaven and earth meet", *shalom* arises. This shalom consists of "justice and peace", or, in other words: "justice leads to peace".

notes

CONTEMPLATIO (to *contemplate*)

Psalms are the ancient prayers, in which the ancient experiences of people in their relationship with God are expressed. They have always been, and still are, a source of inspiration for artists: poets, composers and visual artists. You can pray the psalms or sing them, listen to or read silently. Traditionally, the psalms are the heart of the Liturgy. Since the last Vatican Council, they are also sung as antiphonal, after the first reading in the Eucharist.

Psalm 85 is also called the "Psalm of the turnaround," because the word 'turn' ('repent') sounds in the text as a kind of chorus, in several variants: it is a turning point, a repentance, a return. It is also a "restore of fortune" (v. 2); a "turn away from wrath and anger" (v. 4); "return to God" (v. 5), "return to life" (v. 7) and "not turning again to folly" (v. 9). For God, sins play no longer a role. He has forgiven, and He turned back to his people: He is back to live among them.

notes

As an individual, you can witness justice and peace in your own environment, but the forces can also be bundled: *Justitia et Pax* (Latin for 'justice and peace') is an international network that was established in 1967, at the initiative of Pope Paul VI. The organization is present in 128 countries around the world, and in almost all European countries. In the Netherlands, for example, *Justitia et Pax* was founded in 1968 by the Dutch bishops' conference, in order to "keep the eye of the church vigilant, to keep her heart sensitive, and to keep her hands proficient in promoting social justice." *Justitia et Pax* advises the bishops on issues involving the human rights. *Justitia et Pax* also protests against violations of human rights. Sometimes these are specific violations, such as murder and threats to murder, evictions, torture and disappearances of people. However, it often involves injustice that is hidden in political structures, rules and laws. So, in many cases, *Justitia et Pax* also focuses at politicians. She detects injustice and tries to find solutions. *Justitia et Pax* brings together people and organizations from the Catholic world, who are committed to the ideal of a fairer world.

notes

<intermezzo>

COLLATIO (sharing)

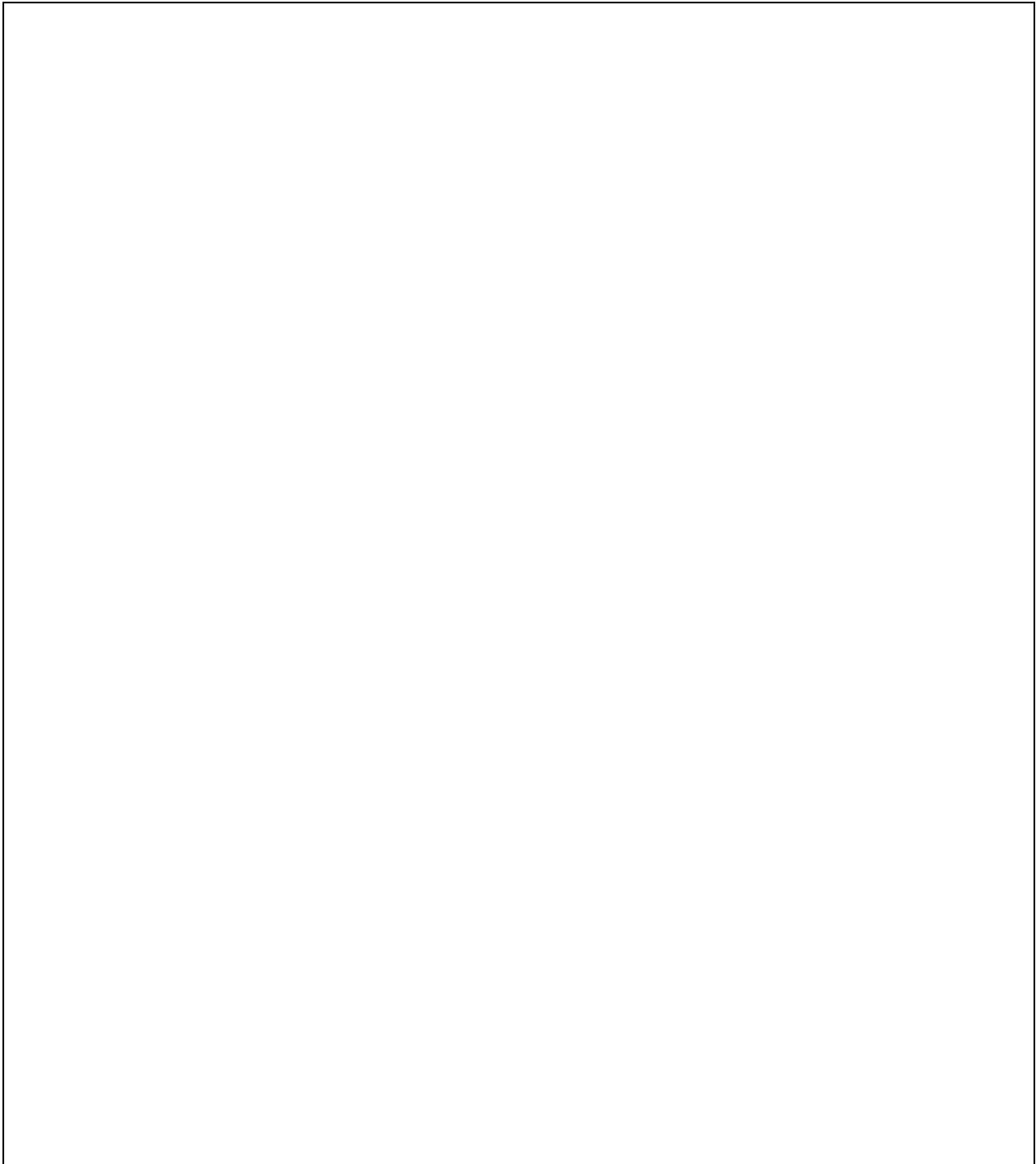
- Whoever is feeling lost, may feel him- or herself in a kind of exile situation. Do you recognize this feeling in your own life? Can you empathize with the situation of the writer of the psalm? What experiences do you share with him? In what way are you touched by this feeling? Are there also verses that seem strange to you, or incomprehensible, or even off-putting?

- The psalmist asks God to no longer harm them and to make them alive. Is it easy for you, to not stay angry at others, and can you give them new opportunities? In what situations is this not too difficult for you?

- When we listen to God, He will come to us and help us. When we listen to God, He comes back to live with us. When God gives good things, the earth will bring forth fruit. What can *you* do to witness justice and peace?

ORATIO (praying)

Please write down a topical prayer, in which faith and truth embrace each other, and in which justice and peace meet and greet each other.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for writing a topical prayer. The box is currently blank.

Some of the prayers you wrote can be read to the whole group.

CREATIO (creating)

Needed for this assignment: some white and colored paper, scissors and glue, (color) pencils. The assignment is executed in small groups of 2 , 3, or 4 persons.

Below is a picture of the Hebrew word *shalom* (you read it from right to left):



m - o - l - sha

Each group should make a design for a logo or a symbol that fits this word, and involve the Hebrew characters in it. Enter the designs on A4 format and scan it or take a picture of it, and share at [facebook.com/AmbassadorsWWB](https://www.facebook.com/AmbassadorsWWB): this way, you send your wish of peace to all Ambassadors and other visitors to the group page!

design sketches

OPERATIO (to act)

- Search for a Department of *Justitia et Pax* in your own country or environment. Do they have activities in your diocese or in your country that you could join?

- Also in your own immediate area, you can work for justice and peace. Please focus on this, during the next month. Next meeting, you can share your experiences. What situations brought joy? What called on opposition? What was new for you in *Justitia et Pax*?