

## May 31 - Saturday

*"Be still, and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations,  
I am exalted in the earth."  
The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

### **Psalm 46: 10-11**

This Psalm begins with images of turbulence and chaos, the shaking of the mountains, the nations in uproar but it ends with a call to silence – *Be still, and know that I am God*. This call to stillness, to be silent is very significant in the midst of a busy and fast moving world. The turmoil we face may not be as massive and gigantic in nature as what the Psalmist describes but in a sense this is what life in New York is all about. People describe our place as a city that ‘never sleeps’ and you can observe how fast people move in subways and walk along the streets, drives their cars in highways. Just a little bit of delay in traffic and people start complaining about being stressed.

Perhaps this is what we need in the midst of our busy schedule. All of us are running over series of appointments and long list of things to do. 7 days a week and 24 hours a day seems lacking and at the end of the day we find ourselves totally exhausted. Putting ourselves in a state of stillness and silence in the midst of endless cycle of movements and activities allow our souls a space to rest and to find God.

*"Be still, and know that I am God!* This is what we need to discover that God is in our midst, at times giving us signal to slow down or move on in pace compatible with our strength. It gives us the opportunity to realize and appreciate that indeed God is a refuge and strength whatever happens around us. But we need to intentionally break ourselves from the cycle of restlessness. St. Augustine discovered this truth when he said, *“my heart is restless until I find rest in thee.”* I found a sticker with the same message but expressing it in another way, *“No God, No Peace. Know God, Know Peace.”* The choice is ours – we can go with the wave of endless confrontation of the confusion and upheaval in our world

or we provide a space for our souls to be silent and experience God's sustaining power and strength.

## **Prayer**

*Teach us how to be still, to be silent  
so that we will know you O God, Amen.*



## **May 30 - Friday**

*Come, behold the works of the LORD;  
see what desolations  
he has brought on the earth.  
He makes wars cease  
to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shields with fire.*

### **Psalm 46: 8-9**

The term 'acts of God' is used by insurance companies when they speak about natural calamities. Typhoons, hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquake, are considered events that are beyond human control and at times not covered by insurance or if it is then the premium would be a bit higher. The Bible speaks about the God of history, a God that is not detached from the world but one who engages the world. Some of the surrounding cultures during Biblical times believe that God is far removed from the world and just watches from a distance what is happening in the world. In our Christian faith, Jesus provides a radical point of departure in terms of our understanding of God. In him and through him, God deals with us in flesh and blood, not just so close but very close indeed.

There are stories in the Bible that speaks about the acts of God in terms of causing flood, sending fire from heaven or bring locust

and other calamities. If God is God then why not, it is within God's power to do so. But the God we know in Jesus is different. He could have called ten thousand angels to protect him but he did not. At one point his disciples pleaded for fire and brimstone to fall from heaven but he refused. Jesus believes in a God who send rain and who let the sun shines both to the righteous and the unrighteous. But there is one thing that is consistent with him, his rejection of violence and war.

The New Jerusalem Bible translated this verses 8-9 this way; *Come, consider the wonders of Yahweh, the astounding deeds he has done on the earth; he puts an end to wars over the whole wide world, he breaks the bow, he snaps the spear, shields he burns in the fire.* Here the acts of God are not the natural calamities that people always refer to when using the term but it speaks about putting a stop to warfare, breaking the weapons of destruction and thereby bringing peace. I find it strange that nations always use the name of God when starting a war but when the war is over leaders attribute victory to the mighty and sophisticated weapons and to the strength of the soldiers. I always doubt claims of God blessing a war but I can always see God's hand in the ushering of peace. It was Jesus himself who said, *"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God."* Pause for a while and reflect where you can see today in our midst, *"the works of the Lord?"*

## **Prayer**

*Direct our eyes O God to where you are  
So that we can also invite others and say,  
Come, behold the works of the LORD. Amen*



## **May 29 - Thursday**

*The nations are in an uproar,  
the kingdoms totter;  
he utters his voice, the earth melts.*

*The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

### **Psalm 46: 6-7**

At the beginning of this Psalm, the writer spoke about nature's upheaval – mountains shaking, waters roaring and foaming, now it is about nations in uproar and kingdoms crumbling. Today, we watch how nations position themselves and outwit each other on issues from terrorism, nuclear arms, economic maneuvering, the race to extract natural resources and even issues like providing aid to victims of calamities. Yesterday, CNN reported the dissolution of the 239 year old monarchy in Nepal, the latest royal kingdom that comes to an end.

Some take these events as signs or prophecies fulfilled but this has been the case for so long. The players may have changed but this kind of world is not foreign to the Psalmist. This is written not to predict what the future will be but to tell us whom to trust whatever that future may be. Reactions and responses of people are also the same – some allied themselves to whoever possesses the most advance weapons, the most number of armies, the strongest economy – even it means turning against the God whom they believed or reshaping God to support what they wanted to do. Others hold on to their faith in God whom their fathers and mothers have known whatever crisis they faced.

“The Lord of host is with us” is a double edged statement. It is both a difficult and a dangerous affirmation. Difficult in the midst of a disastrous calamity and dangerous in the midst of seeming success which is used to justify God's approval of an act that betrays God's nature. But to say, *The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge*, is to put the faith in its proper context. The God to whom we put our trust is not a God whom we can manipulate for our purpose but a God who has been there before us, a God with a track record not only of power but above all of a persona, a quality, a character that defines and directs our decisions and most of all our dealings. The Psalmist reminds us that this is the God who always has the last word, as potently described when God speaks the “earth melts.”

## Prayer

*Whatever happens you are God,  
O Lord of Hosts  
The God before us, behind us,  
above us, beside us  
The God of yesterday, today and tomorrow  
The God of history and the continuing story  
In you we put our trust. Amen.*



## May 28 - Wednesday

*There is a river whose streams  
make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.  
God is in the midst of the city;  
it shall not be moved;  
God will help it when the morning dawns.*

### **Psalm 46: 4-5**

One of the greatest challenges of building a city on the hill is the issue of clean water supply that will support and sustain the residents especially when they are under siege by the enemy. How will you do it in a city situated 2,500 feet above sea level? Water that is above ground can easily be blocked by invaders thereby cutting the supply inside the walled city. Without adequate supply of precious and much needed water, the army however strong they are in terms of weapons cannot fight for so long. So water becomes the life-line of those living inside the city. It is essential for its defense and for the residents' day to day living.

One of the secrets of Jerusalem is her water supply system of hidden wells and underground cisterns feed by underground streams. This is the river that the Psalmist was talking about, an

underground supply of fresh and clean water built through an intricate system of tunnels which was an engineering feat at the time when people had no access to power tools to break through the hard rocks and stones underneath the ground. It was a source of pride and strength, a testament of God's presence.

The water of a flowing river deep within the city is a powerful metaphor of God as the source of life and strength. It is hidden from the eyes just as the water system of Jerusalem of the past. But without this river life is not possible, in fact, they are vulnerable to the forces that seek to destroy them. In like manner this is also true with our lives. Without the inner source of strength deep within us, without God whose presence is like the life-sustaining river of Jerusalem, we will fall even before the morning dawns.

## **Prayer**

*Lead us to draw the water  
in the rivers deep within us  
to assure us that you are in our midst  
not only to help but to sustain us. Amen.*



## **May 27 - Tuesday**

*Therefore we will not fear,  
though the earth should change,  
though the mountains shake  
in the heart of the sea;  
though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains  
tremble with its tumult.*

### ***Psalm 46:2-3***

The much documented 2004 tsunami that hits Indonesia and neighboring countries and the recent earthquake in China gives us

a glimpse of how it was when waters roar and foam and mountains tremble. With the advent of video and digital cameras we have actual footage of what transpired during those terrifying moments. In recalling tragic events of the past, what we have are ruins dug by archeologists in different sites and projected in simulated videos to enhance our imagination as to what actually happened. There were also stories passed on through oral traditions and historical accounts in documents mentioning or at least alluding to these events. When the Psalmist used these very descriptive details, I wonder what events in the past triggered the use of these words. I am sure there were earthquakes with slight and strong intensities, but situated inland, Jerusalem could not experience horrifying tsunamis. Stories of natural and human-made disasters circulate across borders and were not forgotten easily. For sure there were a lot of stories handed down with different and colored variations.

In the midst of these scenarios that the Psalmist wanted us to imagine comes the advice – *we will not fear*. It is cast in the future tense. The events described may have been the experience of a people whom the Psalmist may not know personally but the knowledge of a paralyzing fear that grips us in moments of danger is universal. Even looking at the pictures itself of the tragedies of our time is enough to send shivers. How much more for people who survived and lived through with the experience?

How we will react in the future depends on what we believe now. What the Psalmist wanted us to have is faith in a God who can withstand amidst tragedies of whatever nature, a God who can protect us and a God whom we can turn to, a God who is larger than our fears. In fact, the power of the Lord our God is immanent even in the present moment. Therefore we are prepared to deal with whatever comes in the future – natural or human-made calamities and tragedies, events that drives fear among those who have no other refuge but buildings and structures made by human hands. *We will not fear* is a statement of faith although cast in the future tense but is firmly grounded on the present.

## **Prayer**

*Today, give us a faith O God*

*that is larger than our fears  
so that we can face our tomorrows  
without faltering. Amen.*



## **May 26 - Monday**

*God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.*

### **Psalm 46:1**

What can we say about God? God is our refuge and strength. A refuge is a place of shelter and protection and those who seek its security are called refugees. A refuge should be a place of strength otherwise if it cannot withstand the forces of destruction that refugees are trying to flee from then they will not be secured from harm and most probably perish. In the olden times, people seek protection in walled cities when invaders attack them. Movies depict scenes when people are called out before the big doors are bolted and blocked as enemies will try their best to open it by ramming and at times burning the doors itself to gain access and entry into the city. There were times when the very survival of the whole population depended on the strength of that door. If it breaks then there is no way of stopping the entry of enemy troops. The ability of a refuge to protect is proportional to its strength in relation to the power that it seeks to prevent.

Another crucial element to consider is time. When trouble comes timing is of the essence. What is the use of strong doors if it will not be closed on time before the enemies moved in? Those charged to tend the gates should be precise – operate it on the right moment, not too early when those who were outside the walls cannot go in and help secure it from the inside and also not too late before they can complete the whole procedure of closing it securely. The element of ‘*presentness*’ is just as crucial as the strength of the refuge itself. This is what God is like – a strong

refuge and who is there to help right on time, not too early and not too late either – the translation “*a very present help*” capture not only the sense of urgency but also the element of right timing.

God is *our* refuge and strength. A potent reminder not just of power but also the scope of God’s domain beyond what we consider personal and private. Yes there were moments when the Psalmist made an intimate individual connection but today the writer reminds us of the corporate character of God. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*

### **Prayer**

*What a comforting truth it is O God to rest in the assurance that you are our dependable refuge. Amen.*