

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

October 19, 2025

“Psalms 2-121:1-8: ‘The Lord is your guardian’”

Saint Augustine once said, “The voice of Christ and his Church is mingled in the psalms.” Jesus, on the way to Emmaus, showed the two disciples how his life and death were fulfillments of the prophets and psalms (Lk. 24:27).

The psalmist reminds us: “*The Lord is your guardian.*” Psalm 121, featured today, is called “a pilgrim psalm,” or an ancient prayer that the people of Israel once took on their lips to invoke God’s protection against the curses and other evils of a pagan world.

God’s Chosen People needed reassurance that the Lord would protect them against the malevolence of the sun-god and the moon-god. As pilgrims made their way up to the Jerusalem Temple three times a year for certain feasts (Passover in the spring, Pentecost in the summer, and Tabernacles in the fall), they sang prayers invoking the protection of God.

The first reading from Exodus recounts the battle between the desert Amalekites and the Chosen People, led by Moses. We see the power of prayerful intercession, as hands are upraised and divine power is invoked. God’s people won that battle, but there would be more to come.

The word “guard” or “guardian” is used six times in eight verses of today’s Responsorial Psalm. This is because it was important for the people. Robbers and evil spirits were an ever-present danger to the people, and they depended on God for safety and salvation.

While they struggled and suffered, the Lord was with those he brought out from cruel and bitter slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land of milk and honey. God never stopped guarding his people, and the prayers of the psalms were constantly on their lips as they repeated their cries for help.

“*The Lord is your guardian.*” These words offer consolation and hope for 21st-Century pilgrims as well as ancient pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem.

What do you and I need from a merciful and protective God?

First, we could all use protection from **physical danger**. This could take many forms, including deer on the highways, violence in the streets, or accidents at home. There are all sorts of ways we can be physically injured, and so need the protective power of God.

Then there is protection from **natural disasters**, including tornadoes, wind storms, floods, fire, and freezing rain. It never ceases to amaze me what damage storms can do.

We need protection from **abusive relationships**. People can be cruel and hurt the ones they love most. And these victims sometimes fail to cry out for help. Abuse takes many forms, including physical, emotional, and sexual. Protection from such abuse is the work of God.

Poisonous people are another object of protection. You know the type: people who are constantly criticizing, complaining, backbiting, gossiping, and in other ways harmful to their neighbors. They themselves may be hurting, and are acting out. But we need to be protected from such people so we be happy and holy.

We need protection from **despair** at life's seemingly impossible challenges. There are so many things in life we cannot control, including health and the direction of life. There is so much evil in the world that we can be tempted to give up on God. But God is always here, walking with us through the valleys of darkness.

Finally, we all need protection from **temptation** (as we pray "lead us not into temptation" in the Lord's Prayer). There are so many temptations to sin against God and embrace the world, including temptations to lie, cheat, steal, and hurt others. God can and will help us resist these temptations, if we ask.

The dishonest judge in today's Gospel reminds us that God can and does answer persistent prayers.

"The Lord will guard your coming and your going, both now and forever." May these words encourage us to seek God's protective care on our pilgrim Journey of Faith. Mary, help of Christians, pray for us. God bless you.