

A Newborn Psalm of Praise
By Fr. Glenn McDonald, CSB

Have you ever read a word or phrase that seemed to speak directly to you? Over the past few weeks, I have had several people draw my attention to these words: “We have no one to tell us how long it will last.”

This phrase comes from The Psalms, which is a book in the Bible. The Psalms are 150 short hymns that speak about human experience in relationship with God. There are two major categories of psalms: praise and lament. Psalms of praise articulate the joy of being happy or thankful to God. Psalms of lament capture the experience of sorrow or disappointment, and ask for God’s help.

“We have no one to tell us how long it will last,” comes from Psalm 74. When you read this line, what do you think of?

I immediately thought of COVID-19 and the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. I found the words of Psalm 74 to be strangely comforting, not because they offered a solution to the pandemic that we all face, but because they give me a way to succinctly describe what the experience is like. I guess it is like going to a doctor with a list of mysterious pains and symptoms. Having the doctor give me a diagnosis may not cure my disease, but being able to name it is comforting.

When I ponder Psalm 74 and ask for God’s help, the Holy Spirit draws my mind to an unexpected image — parents and guardians. In particular, my mind recalls a baptism I did for one of our high school teachers who recently had a baby girl. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the family gathered together to celebrate the gift of everlasting life. Masks and social distancing could not suppress the psalm of praise and love that radiated from the parents and the newborn’s two older brothers during this beautiful moment.

I find this memory very comforting. Raising a child is inherently mysterious, open-ended, and challenging. Despite these uncertainties, people still choose to become parents and guardians, because they have an instinct that their love will find a way.

We have no one to tell us how long the pandemic will last, but the example of parents and guardians reminds us that love will overcome.