

**“Sparrows and Swallows”**  
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**Readings:**

**Psalm 84**

**INTRODUCTION**

- Did you know that the Sparrows don't migrate, but swallows do?
  - The sparrow is a bird that finds its territory, makes its home, and remains there year-round.
  - The swallow, on the other hand, is a migratory bird: it flies hundreds and even thousands of kilometers, seeking new places, new skies, and new shelters.
    - There are swallows that fly from Brazil to Canada - and vice versa.
  - And yet, both the sparrow and the swallow need to find a resting place, a safe place to nest, to feed, to survive.
- It is interesting how Psalm 84 specifically mentions these two birds:
  - “Even the sparrow finds a home and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.” (Sl 84:3)
    - In my church in Brazil, sparrows occasionally enter the sanctuary.
- Then we have to open the windows and doors, waiting for them to come out.
- How many times have we seen sparrows flying around there, as if seeking shelter,

- perhaps even confirming with their wings what the psalmist had already proclaimed.
- They sought refuge—and found shelter near the altar of the Lord.
- All of us, whether sparrows that stay or swallows that need to migrate,
  - We are called to find our home.
    - but in God.
  - Our address is not a street, a city, or a country.
    - Our address is the Lord.
    - Because when God came to dwell in us, we began to dwell in God.
- This is the heart of Psalm 84:
  - The joy of dwelling in the presence of God.
- And that is also the message for us today:
  - through all the changes, in all the seasons of life, in all the arid valleys we cross, remaining in God is what sustains us.

## **1. GOD: OUR HOME**

- The psalmist begins by saying:
  - “How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.” (SI 84:1-2)
- Note that the desire is not for the building itself, but for the presence of God who dwells within it.
  - And then the building gains meaning.
  - and it becomes the place where our hearts are awakened to worship and exult in the living God.

- Just as the sparrow found a home and the swallow found a nest, we find refuge near the altars of the Lord, a place of reconciliation.
- But what does it mean to make God our home?
  - That is to say:
    - "My address is not a geographical location, it is a presence."
    - My security lies not in what I possess, but in who supports me.
    - My identity is not defined by the city where I live, but by the God in whom / I / dwell." ○ Job understood this. When he lost everything - wife, children, possessions, friends.
    - He still said:
      - "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."" (Job 1:21).
- To make God our home.
  - It is to declare: "I will worship God, even if circumstances push me in the opposite direction."
  - It's an exercise of faith.
    - It is placing in God what we do not understand or what we still hope for.
    - To cultivate faith, we need to make God our own dwelling place, so that this faith can grow and be strengthened.
    - As the theologian Derek Kidner said: the faith that makes God our home is a bold

faith, a faith that digs blessings even out of suffering.

- And this is one of the things that God places in our hearts today:
  - No matter where we are, let us remain in God.
  - By remaining in God, we will never lose our home, because our home will be everywhere.

## **2. ARID VALLEYS; EYES ON GOD**

- The psalmist continues:
  - “As they go through the valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.” (Sl 84:6)
- Life has its barren valleys and deserts.
  - We've all crossed deserts:
    - Defeats, grief, uncertainty, change.
  - The arid valley is inevitable.
  - The question is: have we been crossing the arid valley sheltered by God?
- We often rely on ourselves, in our strength, in our intellect, in our plans.
  - We try to find shelter in the people around us:
    - friends, family.
  - We try to take refuge in things:
    - money, possessions, comfort.
  - But these things cannot shelter us.
- Because they fall apart.
  - And when things fall apart, we blame God.
  - We build our shelter in the things of this world.
  - And then, when the house falls down, we await answers

- But those answers only faith can provide, not those other things.
- The psalm reminds us:
  - blessed are those who put their faith in God,
  - their strength in God,
  - that pass through the arid valley focused on the tabernacles of the Lord,
    - those will rejoice in God.
- As Job, Paul also understood that.
  - On death row, awaiting his execution, he said:
    - “I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day the deposit I have entrusted to him.” (2 Timothy 1:12)
  - Paul was in the arid valley, but his heart remained in God.
- And that's what we need to learn:
  - We can cross the arid valley with our feet, but our hearts must remain flattened, firmly fixed on God.
  - When the focus is on God, even deserts are transformed into springs of water.
    - The faith that draws blessings even from suffering grows stronger.
- This is not a denial of pain, but faith in activity:
  - "Even in the middle of the valley, I feel at home."
  - "I know in whom I have believed."

### **3. FROM FORCE TO FORCE**

- The psalm concludes by saying that: ○ who dwell in the tabernacle;

- who place their strength in the Lord,
- “They go from strength to strength.” (Sl 84:7a)
- Living from strength to strength shows us that the journey of faith is not lived all at once.
  - It is day-by-day.
  - God gives us strength for today, and tomorrow God will give us strength for tomorrow.
- If you ask me: was it easy or simple to leave Brazil?
  - My answer will be: no.
    - My culture is based on being together and close to family.
    - It hurts deeply to be geographically distant.
  - I came to Canada and was welcomed by my in-laws.
    - What joy! This was the necessary strength I needed.
    - Okay, but it's time to leave the family again.
      - Oh, the Brazilian heart breaks dramatically.
  - I came to North Bay ,
    - and was welcomed by a new family.
    - New day, new strength.
  - What makes these challenges possible is my home.
    - If I dwell in the shelter of the Most High, if I dwell in God, (Psalm 91)
      - He covers me with his wings.
      - He protects me,
      - guides me
      - and He strengthens me.

- Having God as your home is having the strength to face each day.
  - And through these forces, the deserts we are passing through become water sources, sources of living water.
    - When I first moved to Canada over two years ago, loneliness was very difficult.
      - God remained my home.
      - And then he gave me the strength for the second moving:
  - A wife to share my life with.
  - and her family to become my family too.
    - Two years ago, I struggled to find a welcoming church.
      - God remained my home.
      - Now, for the second moving, he has given me the strength:
        - I came to this family.
- I am using these personal examples to show how worthwhile it is to remain in God.
  - I'm sure you also have many examples about this.
- Abide in God.
  - He will renew you and lead you from strength to strength.
- Even when it seems like everything is being taken away, true life, true peace, true home remain within us.

## CONCLUSION

- God is our home.
  - Even when you are far from your brick or wooden house, your real home remains with you.

- Even when the world takes away your peace, your true peace remains within you.
- Even when life steals your health, true life doesn't leave you.
- This is a mystery of faith:
  - When God is our home, nothing can displace us.
- Dear brothers and sisters,
  - Perhaps you are a sparrow flying above the surroundings,
  - Perhaps you are a swallow that flies far away.
  - The most important thing is that, wherever you are, you make God your home, your address.
- Remaining in God is what keeps us stable.
  - He is the rock that does not move, ○ the shelter that doesn't fall apart,
  - The home that never closes its doors.
- May we, like the psalmist, sigh and sing with joy to the living God.
  - May we, like Job, say: “Blessed be the name of the Lord.”
  - May we, like Paul, affirm: “I know in whom I have believed.”
- And may we all, from strength to strength, dwell in the Lord.
- Amen.

### **Bibliography**

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