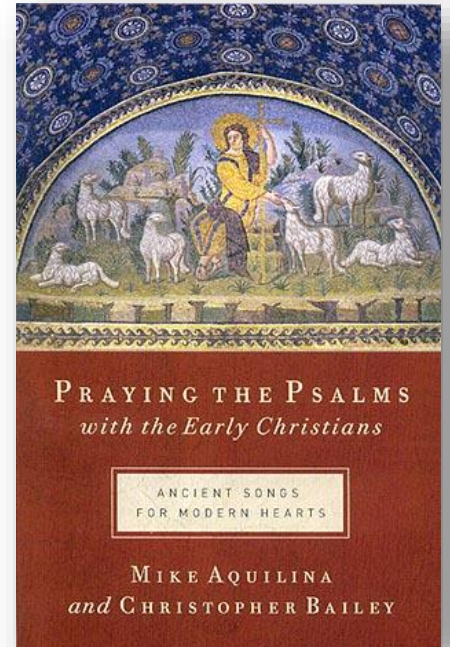


A PSALMS DEVOTIONAL ON THE PASSAGE OF A BELOVED

The Early Christians borrowed a practice from their Jewish ancestors after the passing of a special beloved person. Psalm 119 (the longest of the psalms) was written to honor the passage of the Jewish people from Babylon to Jerusalem. Each verse corresponds to a different day and step in this journey that also represents the journey of a person from death to new life. The first verse of the psalm, 'Blessed are those on the way' speaks to those who are on the way between this world and the next.



Early Celtic Christians formed special communities with the sole purpose of praying the psalms for persons who have died. The tradition evolved to pray Psalm 119 each day for a year following the death of a beloved. The person who agreed to do the prayer for the deceased was called an 'anam aire,' meaning eternal soul friend. Women's spiritual communities of the times especially dedicated themselves to this practice.





In the middle ages, hospices grew up all over Europe not only to tend to the sick and dying but also as centers of prayer and support for family members of the deceased. The tradition continued to pray the Book Psalms, one psalm a day, for an entire year after a person’s passing. Doing this meant that a family member would be agreeing to pray through the entire Book of 150 Psalms about twice during the first memorial year.

There is a modern revival of Praying with the Psalms for a beloved soul. Nan Merrill’s translation is especially accessible because her term for God is ‘the Beloved.’ This language can enable the person praying to relate both to the Divine and to their own personal relationship with a beloved soul. One way of praying the psalms is through a daily devotional practice (usually before bedtime) in order to be in spiritual communion with the person who died. One could either pray the entire psalm 119 each day or, move through it reflectively one verse per day. Journaling afterwards can add a deeper reflection as we recall our everlasting love and connection with the departed.



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