

# OTSP 2512: PSALMS & SPIRITUALITY

Instructor: John Endres, S.J.

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**Location:** This course will meet in San Francisco, at St. Agnes Church, 1025 Masonic (at Fell).

**Time:** TH 06:30PM-09:30PM

## Description and Requirements

The Psalms have nourished the spiritual and theological life of the Church throughout its life: in the liturgy, in theological studies, in personal spirituality. Psalms have also impacted the cultural life of Christians, especially through music, dance and other artistic media. Students in this course will make connections in many of these areas of study, but we begin by studying psalms as part of the Old Testament and ways in which psalms impact the life of the early Christian writings in the New Testament. We will explore different "types" of psalms, moods of sadness and joy, hope and disappointment in them. Other literary questions, including their "ordering" in the Book of Psalms will contribute to our study. The course will require and afford opportunities to "experience" psalms and to reflect on them.

In addition to readings, lectures, discussions on the topics listed below, each week's class will include study of the Responsorial Psalm for the next Sunday, and musical versions of selected Psalms.

Evaluation done by way of three short (2 page) papers, a 6-8 page paper on a psalm(s), regular 'journal' of students' psalm reading, and a class presentation. Students should have some background in study of the Bible.

[15 max enrollment; Auditors with Faculty permission]

- Feb. 2            **Introduction to Psalms:** in the Bible, in the Church, and ways of studying and learning them.
- Feb. 9            **Laments and Human Suffering:** crying out in need, candid language of prayer, the cases of the poor and oppressed
- Feb. 16          **Thanksgivings and Laments:** proclaiming gratitude for divine response to the outcry of lamentors
- Feb. 23          **Praising God:** Hymns of Praise; witnesses to worship in the Temple and a Cosmic view of all Creation
- March 1          **Psalms and the Covenant of God with Israel:** celebrating and proclaiming God's covenant with Israel and with David
- March 8          **Psalms of Trust and Confidence:** pastoral care and Psalms from the Early Church until present times; questions of bereavement, abuse and others (?)
- March 15        **Psalms and David & Royal Psalms:** a view of Psalms in the Hebrew Bible, Judaism, at Qumran and beyond.
- March 22        **Psalms and Early Christians:** 'Messianic' Psalms, in the New Testament, in Christian Spirituality and Liturgy; focus on Holy Week. Augustine and Luther on the Psalms
- March 29        *Spring Recess: No Class*
- April 5 *Holy Thursday: No Class*

- April 12      **Reflecting on Liturgical Spirituality of Psalms and Easter Triduum:** Jesus praying the Psalms; Words for articulating Easter Faith  
**Different Ways of ‘Hearing’ and Interpreting the Psalms**
- April 19      **Psalms and our Environment:** “Green” Psalms of Praise; their implications for worship and ethics
- April 26      **Wisdom and Psalms:** Wisdom Psalms and the encounter of agonizing questions about suffering and the created order. Torah Psalms. Calvin and Psalms.
- May 3        **Questions of Violence and Divine Wrath:** how can religious people ‘read’ Psalms with expressions of anger and visions of violence? Psalms and Judaism.
- May 10      **Psalms and Questions of Gender; Psalms and Transforming Spirituality**
- May 16      **Psalms: Literature, Imagination, Prayer and Life:**

**Books for the Course:**

- Anderson, B.W., with Stephen Bishop. *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for us Today*. 3<sup>rd</sup> revised and expanded edition. Louisville, Ky: Westminster/John Knox, 2000.
- Daly-Denton, Margaret M. *Psalm-Shaped Prayerfulness: A Guide to the Christian Reception of the Psalms*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2011.
- Endres, John and Elizabeth Liebert. *A Retreat with the Psalms: Resources for Personal and Communal Prayer*. New York/ Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001.
- Walker-Jones, Arthur. *The Green Psalter: Resources for an Ecological Spirituality*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.

**Commentary on the Psalms:**

- Davidson, Robert. *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998.