



Julia McGuinness *reflects on* Psalm 124

It's often only when a crisis is over that we can begin to process what's happened. We may feel reluctant to look back on difficult times, but in this psalm David leads God's people in reviewing all they've come through. This is not to relive or romanticise their experience, but to recognise both God's presence in the very thick of things, and God's faithful deliverance from trouble.

Autumn thoughts

God help sailors

by Julian Smith

Autumn is fast becoming a season of devastating storms. The jet stream picks up and deepens Atlantic depressions, hurtling them towards Europe to bring death, destruction and the dislocation of individual and community lives.

While inland areas experience terrible flooding, it is coastal areas that bear the brunt of wind and waves. Erosion threatens homes once far from cliff edges, much-loved beaches are scalped or remodelled and caravan

parks become marinas. Fishing communities are particularly hard hit.

Not only do storms damage boats and important infrastructure, but while fishing boats remain in port no money is being earned and families suffer. Fishing is a way of life passed down through the generations, it is an uncertain way of life but it is a real calling.

The reflection on the weather become a prayer, "God help sailors on a night like this" should be extended to include fishermen and coastal communities. 🌊

“**St Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil.**”

Traditional prayer

King David faced the threat of the Philistine army. Our enemies may be different – from bullies or false friends to crushing circumstances of health or livelihood. Like the psalmist, the strength of our emotional reaction may lead us to describe our crisis in vivid images – the monster capable of swallowing us whole and eating us alive, or the merciless force of a flash flood that threatens to wash us away. Our sense of powerlessness can leave us feeling as vulnerable as a bird in a snare.

Yet this psalm is a reality check. However sharp the teeth, fierce the torrent or ensnaring the traps we face, God's redeeming power is greater. As we look back in the spiritual wisdom of hindsight, we start to look up in praise at what God has done. Then we can look forward again with renewed confidence that the one who sees even a sparrow fall not only brings us through tough times, but strengthens our faith in the process. 🙏

Lord, help us to trust that you are with us even in the midst of our troubles. As your power protects us and your love restores us, give us discerning eyes, grateful hearts and voices willing sing your praise. Amen.

St Michael and All Angels

by Trevor Dennis

This week is the feast of St Michael and All Angels. Michael is best known for defeating the dragon, the one called the Devil, the deceiver of the world, as the story in Revelation puts it. In countless icons that is how he is portrayed. How we long for evil to be defeated – for this world to become truly the kingdom

of God! Well then, through the grace of God, we had better do something about it. For God needs our cooperation. From start to finish the Bible is quite clear about that. We can't leave it all to angels. We must serve as God serves; we must love as God loves.

That is our calling, and it gives a strong purpose and profound meaning to our lives. May God give us the courage, energy and imagination for it. 🙏