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A few weeks ago I was talking about the meaning of "Alleluia", that little word we use often enough, without thinking of what it means - praise, give praise to, the Lord, to God our Father. And last week I played for you a modern folk-song-type song based on a parable spoken by Christ: with the suggestion that that a similar lively catchy song could be an excellent way of praising God - praying. For some reason, (and I've never had a really satisfying explanation for it) Catholics generally are very reluctant to express their joy and praise - thanks to God in any kind of enthusiastic song or prayer together. At a party, a dinner, a wedding we make just as much noise as anybody else when we're celebrating: but despite repeated encouragement from Popes & the recent Council, you have to search hard for a parish which really prays & sings together unselfconsciously. When you find one, and join with them, you realise what the others are missing. The dimension of joy, and the spontaneous expression of it (like a housewife humming to herself as she works, & a man whistling unconsciously as he takes a walk) often seems somehow bottled up within us as we worship God and ^{try to} concentrate on fixed formulas of prayer. But think of a man like St. Francis, in love with the whole world, with God & all His creation - St. Francis couldn't help but sing with joy and praise and thanksgiving. And he was quite well aware of the poverty and suffering of his time and probably did more about it than most of us do in our age. I hope, ~~you~~ ^{if you've} been a regular listener to Midday Prayer, that you will have been helped to pray and praise God with joy for all He's done for you and wants you to do for Him in love. Today's is the last Catholic edition of these Midday Prayer programmes for the time being, so I pray with you now that

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the joy and peace of Christ be always with you, that you may come to understand the depth of God's love for us and be able, through His grace, to bring this understanding to others through your enthusiasm and your joy in praise of God's mercy. Let us pray: PRAYERS.

Our prayer in song today is a prayer composed to be sung - one of the Psalms, B150 setting by Benjamin Britten, sung by Downside Boys choir. The Rosary has for many centuries been a popular Catholic form of prayer, meant to be (tho' some people find it difficult) an easy way of meditating on the great things God has done for us in Christ's life, death & resurrection. It's been called a layman's divine office - whether because the 15 mysteries contemplated in the Rosary take the space of 150 Hail Marys, ~~the~~ ^{like} the 150 psalms of the Office, I can't say. But I'd like to suggest that the Psalms are, after all, very special prayers: they're part of the inspired word of God, and as such, surely, should become our daily prayer too. The rosary has its place, but it's only one kind of prayer, which had its origin, don't forget, before the advent of printing, when most people couldn't read and the language of worship in the church, in which the Psalms were recited, was not understood by ordinary people. But now, we can read, and there are numerous & some very good translations of the Psalms available. We've no excuse for not using them. Of course, they're Old Testament prayers & thus to some extent cause difficulty in understanding; and we may find some of them perhaps unengaging. But there's a wealth of thought & feeling and

expression in them which can be easily discovered and prayerfully used - for they are prayers. You can find psalms, or just sections of them, to express your feelings at prayer - in joy, in sorrow, in discouragement, in hope, in confidence, in trouble, in relief & thanksgiving - the list is pretty inclusive, both for private prayer and prayer in common. We find it easy enough to go on our knees to ask God for various favours, in our own words; but when happy things come & nice things happen to us, it seems more difficult to find words to really thank God. Besides, there are so many favours of God's love which we don't realize or think much about, which we take for granted. Perhaps, if we really got used to praying the many Psalms of thanksgiving & praise to God for His goodness to us & all His creation ~~the~~ ^{our} difficulties of finding words and ~~the~~ ^{our} forgetfulness of the really big things would be taken care of. Finally, the Psalms were written to be sung - and singing from a full heart is still, even if you've got no voice, a more complete expression of at least some of the deepest human emotions.

To those of you who are sick and may have found comfort in these programmes, may I wish every grace & blessing of God's love and a speedy recovery of health for His service before this or a similar programme resumes, ~~which~~ ^{20 years} is a long time for one radio programme to be on the air. If you've been helped by these Monday Prayers, perhaps now you can help us, by letting us know your ideas & thoughts, to produce later on a more helpful & useful programme. May almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit.