

1453
1886

Midday Prayers - 994

8.10.84
8.10.90

There's a wonderful For this month, FW Faber hymn "There's a wilderness & sea's very life the wilderness of the sea"
 Earthly Versus ^{Flow} Divine 'The Eagle and the Dove' was the title of a book published some 50 yrs ago
 it 2' 19 by Vere Sackville-West. It's a study of the contrasting character and history of the two Carmelite saints who share the name Teresa: the 16th century Spanish mystic, writer and reformer from Avila; and the 19th century French contemplative ^{whose} name's now permanently linked with the town of Lisieux where she lived most of her short life. This Monday, this year falls exactly between the feasts days, last Monday and next, of the two Teresas, dove and eagle. It was a song and a psalm, however, that suggested this link.... or rather, perhaps, my recalling the title of that book, The Eagle and the Dove. Wings of prayer, song, devotion: breaking free into the air, to soar upwards towards God — the image of flying, of wings to support and to liberate is a common enough one, and not only in the Bible and religious literature and poetry. The common human desire to "take wing", to be "free as a bird", has a religious allegory, as a symbol of worship and of prayer, of going unencumbered towards God, of leaving behind the restrictions and limitations of earth-bound life. Wings figure prominently in some of the visions of the Old Testament prophets: both the eagle and the dove are birds of symbol in the poetry of Israel. And surely the amazing popularity, some years ago ^{now} of a small book about a sea-gull soaring to unknown heights — Jonathan Livingston Seagull — surely it was the symbolic meanings, ^{ordinary} human ones just as much as the possibly religious ones, that made that book such a success. In a time for prayer and invitation to prayer, like this, let's reflect and pray

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for a lifting of our hearts & souls towards God so that our prayer may take us close to Him, in joy, lightness and freedom. From Ps 54: "O that I had wings like a dove to fly away and be at rest. So I would escape far away and take refuge in the desert. I would hasten to find a shelter from the raging wind, from the destructive storm, O Lord." — those verses are the basis of the song I want to play for you today, as our prayer is music... it's a bit unusual in that I very seldom ever play this kind of music: but this song used to be (in my youth anyway) very popular and frequently sung — tho' I hadn't heard it for years till coming across this record: Mendelssohn's "O for the wings of a dove" MUSIC PRATER

The Psalm from which the words were taken for Mendelssohn's "O for the wings of a dove" is Ps 54: in contrast to the atmosphere of the song, the Ps itself is more full of distress and discouragement than almost any other in the whole Bk of Psalms. It pictures the distress of a man betrayed by a friend — the very deep wounds of suffering that's not just bodily or physical. In the psalmist's very protestations of trust in God you can sense too the wavering that we all experience sometimes.... we have our doubts, perhaps we're a Judas ourselves? As one who's walked with Jesus, yet have we, do we betray Him? Ps 54 (Gail) p101