



Lent reflection for April 7, 2025

Click [here](#) to listen to the podcast!

Psalm 86: 11-17

*Teach me your way, O Lord,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.
I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name for ever.
For great is your steadfast love towards me;
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.*

*O God, the insolent rise up against me;
a band of ruffians seeks my life,
and they do not set you before them.
But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
Turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant;
save the child of your serving-maid.
Show me a sign of your favour,
so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame,
because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.*

Today's reflection is from Markus Krah:

I am reading this psalm during a busy time. Sometimes this season feels like a roller coaster ride, what with the political situation, fast-paced challenges at work, the changing weather, and the transition into Lent. Sometimes just a single day feels like such a ride, with more ups and downs than one can easily navigate.

It was in such a situation that this psalm spoke to me. I read it first early in the morning, and heard the words echo over the course of the day. In the Bible, sleep and death are often linked, so thanking God that he “delivered my soul from the depth of Sheol” makes for a good start into the light of a new morning. “Teach me your way, O Lord,” so that I make this a good day for me and others. As the sun rises earlier these days, it is easier for me to start the day with a sense of optimism that is fueled by, besides coffee, some basic trust in God's cosmic order and my place in it. Plenty of reason to thank God with my undivided heart.

But how long does this sense of trust in the fundamental goodness of the world last on any given day? One fight over which shoes my kids want to put on? A missed subway connection? A frustrating meeting at work? Or does it

take more to feel under attack, as the psalmist does? A health scare? Worries about money? The latest piece of news that makes my phone buzz? It will be different for each one of us, but many of us will have some ruffian rising up against us.

When I feel that my confidence in myself, the world, and God is undermined by an onslaught of bad news, large and small, I, like the psalmist, look around me for help. In the psalm, the text turns immediately from the fear of the ruffians to the trust in the merciful and gracious God. The pleading comes a few verses later: “give your strength to your servant.” And, interestingly, the psalmist shows that inner strength derived out of faith is not enough in the face of the challenges: “Show me a sign of your favour, so that those who hate me see it and be put to shame.” It’s a bit like calling for one’s big brother or sister, or a child crying for their mom or dad.

Reading this made me realize just that: How vulnerable we can feel, even as adults who may raise children, be successful in demanding jobs, and navigate other day-to-day challenges. Our inner strength, self-confidence, takes us only so far. Family, friends, a community will help, and so does the faith (however hard-won) in a God who helps and comforts me, whether in ways that the ruffians recognize, or by providing the inner strength to face these challenges. I hope that Lent will heighten my awareness of this grace – and of the need for me to be open to it.



Markus Krah has come to Holy Apostles with his wife and twin daughters soon after moving to New York from Berlin. He runs the Leo Baeck Institute, a non-profit dedicated to preserving German Jewish history.