

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When Jesus said these words from the cross, it must have sent shivers through the disciples. He was the Son of God. He could work miracles. He preached with wisdom. He knew their inner thoughts. He prayed night and day. How could Jesus say that God had forsaken him?

He was, of course, quoting Psalm 22, from which we sang some verses after the first reading. The psalm opens this way. It calls upon a personal God – “my God” – a God in relationship, and it calls upon him twice for emphasis: My God, my God. A God in relationship should not have forsaken anyone. Whoever wrote this psalm was in big trouble. Enemies were attacking. No relief was in sight. Harm was near, and God seemed very far.

We all have moments when we feel this way, as if God has forsaken us – when kids get bullied, when women get raped. Even Jesus quoted these words on the cross. His friends had run away. His enemies had taken control. He had no escape. He was being put to death.

When Jesus prayed this psalm, he virtually announced that you could interpret his life based on prophecies from of old. Psalm 22 says, “They divide my garments among them,” just as Jesus’ killers stole his clothes. And, “They have pierced my hands and my feet,” just as Jesus was nailed to a cross.

At the end, the psalm praises God for coming to the rescue, and we will hear about the rescue of Jesus next Saturday night. But today we sit and meditate on this empty cry, “Why have you forsaken me?”

God never forsakes us, even when we feel all alone. We admit that anytime we pray in time of distress. If God really had abandoned us, there’d be no point in praying. But there is a point. God is there. In the midst of fear and anguish, loss and confusion, we feel the temptation not to go on believing. But God is there.