

# ***Lord, Listen To My Groaning (Psalm 5:2)***

***A Reflection by Ricardo Silva SJ (adapted)***

Anger abounds. Whether in the political landscape, where the election looms and ideological divisions deepen, or in the relentless state of global wars. Amid all this conflict, racism and homophobia continue to infect our society, prompting us to acknowledge the piercing histories that gave rise to celebrations like Pride Month. Even the church, once a beacon of solace and moral rectitude, grapples with its own scandals and internal divisions, leaving many faithful frustrated by the apparently glacial pace of progress and institutional inaction. And though, as Dante said, hope is the last to die, it would seem it is anger that is in ever-greater supply.

*“Lord, listen to my groaning,”* the psalmist implores. Anger, despair, pleading and frustration are fundamental feelings that make us human - as the psalmist’s heartfelt cries demonstrate. Yet, despite repeated reassurances from Scripture and loved ones that it’s O.K. for us to have feelings, we quickly try to suppress our strong emotions -especially when they’re directed at others. We react strongly to circumstances beyond our control and then judge ourselves harshly for lacking restraint, as if we should be able to will away our instinctive emotional responses. We might even think of ourselves as unchristian for harbouring feelings of contempt towards ourselves and others.

To make matters worse, we find ourselves getting angry even with God - feeling frustrated by God’s apparent inaction, resentful of God’s silence or betrayed by the suffering that God permits. But this anger with God only fuels further feelings of shame and guilt; we tell ourselves it’s unacceptable to be angry with God, and we criticize ourselves harshly for it, trapping us in a cycle of anger and despair that feels inescapable.

I hear this turmoil, brooding and breeding in people’s souls with a certain constancy, in my pastoral ministry - when someone seeks my counsel one-on-one, asks a question in a group setting or even when they seek forgiveness during the sacrament of Reconciliation for their anger toward God. But is this belief that we must suppress anger toward God really true?

Throughout the Psalms, we find the psalmists expressing lament, complaint and even anger towards God in response to injustice, suffering and God’s perceived silence. They cry out, *“How long, Lord? Will you utterly forget me?”* (Ps 13:2); *“How long, Lord? Will you be angry forever?”* (Ps 79:5) and *“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why so far from my call for help, from my cries of anguish?”* (Ps 22:2). Repeatedly, they implore, *“Do not hide your face from me!”* (Ps 13:2; 44:25; 88:15). It appears the psalmists saw no wrong in expressing their raw, perhaps even unprocessed emotions in their prayers to God, so why should we feel any contempt or feel the need to censor our feelings when we sit with God?

Maybe take the time today to start your prayer in the words of the psalmist: **“Lord, listen to my groaning,”** and cry out to God in your despair. Perhaps, you will find that hope is indeed the last to die - even when despair seems more compelling.

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