

A Psalm for the Troubled Teacher

Lord, do not turn a deaf ear to the hubbub in my classroom.
Do not close your eyes to the behaviour of the pupils.
Do not abandon me to their parents.

When the classroom door slams shut at the start of every lesson I feel afraid.
I feel as though I have been locked in a prison cell with a bunch of thugs;
I feel like a rabbit caught in the headlights of oncoming traffic;
I feel like an actor who has forgotten his lines.

My mind goes blank.
My mouth goes dry.
My hands shake.

Hear my silent cry for mercy, Lord.
Catch my arrow prayers as I fire them in quick succession.
Tell me what to say and how to say it.
Tell me how to survive until break time.

Lord, you are a God of discernment.
You see that I am right and my students are wrong.
You notice that I receive no parental support whatsoever.
You alone observe that the senior management never back me up.

Lord of justice – sort out my students!
Wipe away their mocking grins.
Make them sit down, shut up and face the front.
Force them to obey my every command unquestioningly.

Lord of power – remind parents of their duties!
Remind them that I am a professional.
Give them the words to thank me publicly for the fantastic work I do.
Encourage them to give me their unconditional support in all matters of discipline.

Lord of justice, power and action – wake up the senior management team!
Make them sensitive to my needs as a classroom practitioner.
Let them walk past the classroom whenever I need help.
Blind them to my poor planning and weak classroom management.

The voice of the Lord booms down the corridor:
'You shameless hypocrite! First repent of your own sin!'
The voice of the Lord shakes the coffee mugs on the staffroom table:
'You heathen fool! Let go of your conceit and abandon your anger.'

The voice of the Lord echoes in the canteen:
'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.'

The voice of the Lord fills the classroom:
'Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God.'

The voice of the Lord calls across the playground:
'The whole world is mine: every school and college; every learner and teacher.'

The voice of the Lord speaks quietly to my heart:
'Trust me – I placed you here for a purpose.'