

PSALM 21

- ✠ This psalm is written in the form of a Lament. It is also identified as a Messianic Psalm.
 - ✧ See the note about “lament” in the introduction to Psalm 3.
 - ✧ See the note about “messianic psalm” in the introduction to Psalm 2.
- ✠ NAB : There are three sections to the psalm : vv. 2-12 concern the present distress in contrast with God’s previous mercy ; vv. 13-22 concern the surrounding of King David by enemies ; vv. 23-27 concern an invitation to praise God. There is a supplement in vv. 28-the end, which serves as a coda of universal praise.
- ✠ *The Orthodox Study Bible* indicates that this psalm prepares for the Death, and Resurrection of Christ.
- ✠ Bishop Eusebius informs us that this psalm refers to Christ throughout. It concerns details of His whole life, and He cites this psalm concerning Himself. These words are, indeed applicable only to our Saviour.
- ✠ Saint Athanasius reminds us that all the psalms in one or another manner refer to Christ ; however, Psalm 21 and Psalm 68 particularly foreshadow the Holy Cross and His great sufferings of betrayal, scourging and crucifixion on our behalf.
- ✠ Saint Ambrose prepares us to understand this psalm by reminding us that for the Lord, the future is in the present. For God, the past, present and future are all “now”. For Him, indeed, since He knows everything, the events in this Psalm are to Him already in the past. Yet, at the same time, the Crucifixion of Christ is anticipated in these words.
 - ✧ Saint Augustine points out that this psalm, composed long before the Incarnation, gives an outline of and preparation for the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, as clearly as in the Gospels.
 - ✧ Saint Leo the Great further reminds us that the Prophet, King David, preceded the events foretold in this psalm by more than 1,100 years. He likewise refers to the future as present or past.
 - ✧ According to Eusebius of Cæsarea, this psalm “refers to Christ and to no-one else, for its contents harmonise with none other but Him”.
- ✠ According to Cassiodorus, this psalm is solemnly sung at Pascha. Further, he opined that this psalm “ought to have been enough to inspire belief in the passion that Truth so obviously claimed about Himself”.
- ✠ Regarding the use of this psalm in the New Testament, and also of many other passages in the Old Testament, Christ taught His disciples how they are to be understood, as described by the Evangelist Luke, “*Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself*” (Luke 24:27). See also Matthew 26:24, 54, 56 ; Mark 9:12 ; 14:49 ; Luke 18:31 ; 24:44-46 ; John 1:45 ; 20:9 ; Acts 2:30-32 ; 13:29 ; 17:2-3 ; 1 Corinthians 15:3 ; 1 Peter 1:11.
- ✠ This psalm is used (verses 2, 19) as the Prokeimenon before the Seventh Gospel of Great and Holy Friday Matins. It is read fully at the First Hour following this Matins. It is used (verses 2, 19) as the First Prokeimenon of Vespers of Great and Holy Friday. It is used (verses 2, 3, 4) as the First Antiphon of the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

“Supplication of Christ in His Passion”

“The Great Shepherd gives His life for the sheep”

“The sufferings of Christ and the redemption of the nations”

1 For the End. About the support in the morning. A psalm by David.

V 1 About the Inscription : in the Masoretic (Hebrew) text, the Inscription is : “To the choirmaster : according to the Hind of the Dawn. A Psalm of David”.

✧ This may refer to the melody to which the psalm is to be sung.

✧ About “*for the End*” : see the note about “*for the End*” on Psalm 4:1.

✧ About “*support*” : see the note on Psalm 3:4.

✧ About “*in the morning*” : Saint Jerome helps us to understand that “*in the morning*” refers to that dawn on the third day after the Passion of Christ, when it was seen that He had risen from the dead. He reminds us that at this moment of the Resurrection, we were and are lavishly filled with God’s kindness. The Lord’s kindness is always with us, but especially is it in the Resurrection. This is why the phrase “*support in the morning*” (or “*protection at dawn*”) refers to this inexpressible kindness.

✧ Saint Augustine explains that these words may be understood as being a prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as He prays about His own Resurrection. He was raised “*in the morning*” of the Third Day : He trampled death, and “*death no longer has dominion over Him*” (Romans 6:9).

✧ Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) comments that this means the early morning, or the dawn. “Dawn” (sunrise, first-light), he says, is one of the titles of Christ.

✧ Dawn, the rising sun, the east (the orient), are metaphors for the Risen Christ. See the note on Luke 1:78 (Canticle 9, part 2). See the Tropar for the Nativity of Christ.

✧ See Psalm 45:6.

[Ὁ Θεός, ὁ Θεός μου Deus, Deus meus]

2 O God, my God, give heed to me ; why have You abandoned me ?/
Far from my salvation are the words of my errors.

V 2 Saint Athanasius says that Christ is, as it were, here chanting these words about Himself, and also personifying all Mankind. Saint Athanasius tells us that this whole Psalm is prophetic, and that it foretells the events of the Crucifixion and the plots that surrounded His Passion. He says that the Prophet places all this before us because Christ did not suffer on His own account, but rather on behalf us. He, who knew no sin, as the God-Man identifies with our fallenness. This is supported by Cassiodorus, who says that He who is sinless calls His our transgressions. This is why the Apostle says “*for He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin* (2 Corinthians 5:21)”. See Isaiah 53:4.

✧ Saint Gregory of Nazianzus explains about these words that Christ was not abandoned in any way by His Father. Rather, He represents us ; He takes us, forsaken and despised, upon Himself, in order that we might be saved. He takes our foolishness and our lawlessness upon Himself, and He makes them His own.

✧ Saint Cyril of Alexandria explains that “we confess that He, the Son begotten of God the Father and Only-begotten of God, although being incapable of suffering according to His own nature, suffered in His own flesh for our sake according to the Scriptures”.

✧ Saint Ambrose of Milan reminds us that when circumstances are very difficult and painful, human beings characteristically feel that they are abandoned and alone. However, Christ took upon Himself everything concerning the state of fallen human beings. In all His saving acts, He bore with Him all our weakness and pain. [In the Resurrection, He took all this with Him and healed it. We are, in fact, never abandoned.]

✧ Bishop Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus, informs us that Christ speaks these words on our behalf. As the Source of righteousness, He assumed our sin. As the Sea of blessing, He accepted the curse that is on us [see 5 Moses 21:23]. “*He endured the Cross, despising the shame*” (Hebrews 12:2).

✧ Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh says that the death of One who is eternal is, in the end, beyond our comprehension. He further says that, in his opinion, Jesus Christ was not simply quoting, or reciting the psalm. Rather, because of His complete taking on of human nature in His Incarnation, this is truly the cry of one dying a violent death. He says that the psalm was, nevertheless, directed towards the event ; and that Christ’s descent into Hadēs was the ultimate point of His solidarity with us. The ultimate glory was the bodily Resurrection, and the Ascension to Heaven, as He took our human nature with Him.

✧ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) writes that all the Evangelists mention that the sufferings of Jesus are the fulfilment of the words of the prophet (verse 8 is in Mark 15: 29 ; verse 9 is in Matthew 27:43 ; verse 19 is in Matthew 27:35, Mark 15: 24, Luke 23:34, and John 19: 23-24).

✧ About this verse : see Matthew 27:46 ; Mark 15:34 ; see also Isaiah 49:14 ; 54:7.

✧ Saint Augustine refers to the first part of the verse, and he continues to explain the second part. He asks how it could be that Christ could express abandonment and then refer to His errors, since He was sinless. He then recalls for us that these words refer to the fact that Christ took upon Himself all the sins of the human race, and it is in this context that He expresses these words (see 2 Corinthians 5:21 ; 1 Peter 2:22).

✧ About “*God*” : see the note about “*God*” on Psalm 3:3.

✧ About “*salvation*” : see the note about “*salvation*” on Psalm 3:9.

3 O my God, I shall cry out by day, and You will not hear me ; /
by night, and it shall not be foolishness for me.

V 3 About this verse : Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea explains that these words indicate that although the Lord appeared not immediately to hear the cry, it was not foolish to emit the cry, because the Lord waits until the appropriate time, the right time. See 2 Corinthians 6:2 [Isaiah 49:8].

✧ Saint Augustine points out that the time and the manner of the Lord's hearing and acting on our cries has to do with what is both right and best for us in our situation in life. As a good physician, He does not heed our complaints when we are passing through some sort of healing procedure, since the present pain will lead to healing and wholeness. See the notes on Psalms 6:2 ; 9:22.

✧ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) comments that perseverance in prayer, even when there seems to be no response, is not to be considered to be absurd.

✧ Although one may feel that God does not hear one's cries, it is not "*foolishness for me*" to continue to appeal to Him. Our ancestors trusted God : they called to Him, and He rescued them (see Wisdom of Sirach 2:10). It is also to be remembered that most believers experience what appears to be an absence of God from time to time. This absence is not really an absence, because He is always with us, and in us. It is we who must learn to trust Him, even if we cannot sometimes sense His presence. Perhaps it is our hardness of heart that makes Him seem to be distant.

✧ About "*God*" : see verse 2.

✧ About "*cry out*" : see the note on Psalm 17:42.

4 But You dwell in a holy place :/ You, the Praise of Israel.

V 4 About "*holy place*" : see the note on Psalm 19:3.

✧ About "*the Praise of Israel*" : The word "*Israel*" may refer our memory to the change of the name of Jacob to Israel (see 1 Moses 32:28). As Saint Augustine writes, God Himself may be known as the "*Praise of Israel*", of the one who sees You. Israel (Jacob) saw God and he did not die (see 1 Moses 32:30). The true desire of the people of Israel is to see God. The Church, the New Israel, has the same purpose. Some commentators note a translation from the Masoretic text which can to some extent explain the phrase : "*The Lord inhabits the praise of His people*".

✧ See the notes regarding capitalisation on Psalm 17:2, 3.

✧ About "*Israel*" : see the note about "*Israel*" on Psalm 13:7.

5 Our fathers hoped on You ; / they hoped, and You rescued them.

V 5 About "*they hoped, and You rescued them*" : Saint Augustine recalls some concrete examples of those who hoped on the Lord and were rescued : Israel from Egypt ; the Three Young Men from the furnace ; Daniel from the lions ; Susanna from false accusation.

✧ About "*hope*" : see the note on Psalm 4:6.

✧ About "*rescued*" : see verses 9, 21 ; see the note about "*rescue*" on Psalm 6:5.

6 To You they cried out, and they have been saved ;/ on You they hoped,
and they were not put to shame.

V 6 About “*cried out ... saved*” : see the note about “*while praising ... call ... saved*” on Psalm 17:4.

✠ About “*saved*” : see the note on Psalm 3:8.

✠ About “*hoped ... shame*” : Saint Augustine points out that their hope did not disappoint or deceive them because their hope was not on themselves but on the Lord.

✧ See Psalms 24:2-3 ; 30:2 ; 70:1 ; Daniel 3:40 ; Romans 5:5.

✠ About “*not put to shame*” : the NIV explains that “*shame*” was a prominent element in ancient and Near Eastern societies [and in more recent ones as well]). When someone violated the norms of the community of faith and of society [they were as one], then that offender was ridiculed or even ostracised. Examples are given in 1 Kingdoms 20:30 ; 2 Kingdoms 19:4 ; Proverbs 3:38 ; 19:26 ; Ezekiel 16:63. It is the psalms that use this concept most frequently. Avoiding shame is found in living in harmony with the Lord. Examples are given in 1 Moses 2:25 ; Psalms 21:5 ; 30:2 ; 68:7 ; 70:1 ; 118:31 ; Isaiah 28:16 ; 49:23.

✧ See the note about “*not put to shame*” on Psalm 30:18 ; see Psalms 24:2, 3, 20 ; 30:2 ; 36:19 ; 68:7 ; 70:1 ; Isaiah 24:22 ; Daniel 3:40.

7 But as for me, I am a worm and not a Man,/ an object of reproach of
Men, and of scorn to the people.

V 7 The NAB explains that this verse portrays a sense of having been dehumanised and isolated.

✠ About this verse : Saint Ambrose informs us that our Saviour became all these forms of humiliation in order to experience the depth of our pain and suffering, in order that He might wipe away our curses, sins and reproaches. [See 1 Corinthians 15:55.]

✠ About “*reproach ... to the people*” : Bishop Eusebius asks that we not be surprised that our Saviour was reproached and scorned by people. Even now, He remains a reproach and a scorn to those who have not come to know and accept Him.

✠ About “*object of reproach*” : this translates the Greek word ὀνειδος, *oneidos*, which means “an object of reproach”, “a reproach”.

✧ See Psalms 30:12 ; 38:9 ; 43:14 ; 56:4 ; 77:66 ; 78:4 ; 88:42 ; 108:25 ; 118:22 ; 122:4 ; 151:7 ; Daniel 3:33 (Matins Canticle 7). See also the note about “*reproach*” on Psalm 14:3 (a different Greek word).

✠ About “*people*” : see verse 32 ; the note about “*people*” on Psalm 2:1.

✠ See Job 25:6 ; Isaiah 53:3.

8 All those beholding me sneered at me ;/ they spoke with their lips ;
they shook their head :

V 8 About “*beholding*” : see Psalms 30:12 ; 67:25.

✠ About “*sneered*” : Saint Cyril of Alexandria explains that in the Incarnation, our Saviour took upon Himself the weakness of our flesh : He took everything about us, including our sin, upon Himself. Although He remained sinless (Hebrews 2:17 ; 4:15), He similarly accepted the derision to which He was subjected.

✠ See Psalm 108:25 ; Wisdom of Solomon 2:19-20 ; Matthew 26:67-68 ; 27:29, 39 ; Mark 9:12 ; 15:29 ; Luke 18:32 ; 22:63 ; Philippians 2:7.

9 “He hoped on the LORD ; let Him rescue him ;/ let Him save him,
for He delights in him” ;

V 9 About this verse : Cassiodorus reminds us that all these words are cited in the Holy Gospels. These words are, in fact, so intertwined in our consciousness that we seem in this psalm to be citing something which has already been accomplished and fulfilled.

✠ About “*Lord*” : see the note about “*Lord*” on Psalm 1:2.

✠ About “*rescue*” : see verse 5.

✠ About “*delights*” : see the note about “*delighting in*” on Psalm 5:5.

✠ See Psalm 3:3 ; Wisdom of Solomon 2:18 ; Matthew 27:43 ; Mark 15:31 ; Luke 23:35-36.

10 for it is You that drew me out from the womb,/ my Hope from
the breasts of my mother ;

V 10 About this verse : see Psalms 70:6 ; 138:13 ; Isaiah 44:2.

✠ About “*Hope*” : in this case, “*Hope*” is used as a sort of title for the Lord. See the notes on Psalm 17:2, 3 ; see Psalm 13:6. About other uses, see the note on Psalm 61:8.

11 I was cast over to You from the womb :/ from the womb of my mother,
You are my God.

V 11 About this verse : Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) mentions that these words are analogous to the adoption ritual reported in 1 Moses 30:3 ; 48:12.

✠ About “*You are my God*” : Saint Ambrose of Milan reminds us that when our Saviour utters such words as these, He speaks as a Man. He refers us back to verse 2 as well. Saint Augustine writes in a similar fashion.

✧ See Psalms 30:15 ; 55:10 ; 117:28 ; 139:7 ; 142:10.

✧ About “*God*” : see verse 2.

12 Do not stand away from me, for affliction is near,/ for there is no-one helping me.

V 12 About “*do not stand away from me*” : see Psalms 34:22 ; 37:22.

✧ About “*there is no-one helping me*” : both Saint Augustine and Bishop Eusebius of Cæsarea consider that we are utterly afflicted, and miserable indeed, if we do not have the Lord’s help. This is supported also by Diodoros of Tarsus.

✧ About “*helping*” : see 5 Moses 32:38 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 27:7 ; 36:40 ; 39:14 ; 40:4 ; 43:27 ; 45:6 ; 53:6 ; 69:2, 6 ; 85:17 ; 93:17, 18 ; 106:12, 41 ; 108:26 ; 118:86, 117, 175.

13 Many young bulls encircled me :/ fat bulls encompassed me.

V 13 About this verse : Saint Augustine explains that the “*young bulls*” are the disorderly mob which surrounded our Saviour, and the “*fat bulls*” are the gloating leaders. Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrus writes similarly.

✧ About “*young bulls*” : this is sometimes translated “*bullocks*”, which means the same thing. In Hebrew, these are the “*strong bulls of Bashan*”.

✧ See Amos 4:1 ; Matthew 27:20, 27.

✧ The NAB points out that the enemies are compared with beasts. See also verses 14, 17, 21, 22.

14 They opened their mouth against me,/ as a lion snatching and roaring.

V 14 About “*opened their mouth*” : Saint Augustine compares the mob and its cries with the roaring of the lion. He recalls the cry : “*Crucify Him, crucify Him*” cited in John 19:6.

✧ See also Lamentations 2:16 ; 3:42.

✧ About “*lion*” : see verse 22 ; see also the note on Psalm 7:3.

✧ About “*snatching*” : see the note about “*snatch*” on Psalm 7:3.

15 Just as water have I been poured out,/ and all my bones have

been scattered abroad ;/ my heart became just as wax, melting
in the midst of my entrails.

V 15 As Saint Athanasius explains to us, verses 15 and 16 give the prophetic preparation for the evil torture of the Crucifixion which our Saviour, the Christ, suffered.

✧ The TOB repeats this assertion that this verse describes the agony of Christ at Gethsemane.

✧ About “*poured out*” : see Psalms 78:3, 10 ; 105:38 ; Job 30:16.

✧ About “*heart*” : see the note about “*heart*” on Psalm 4:3.

16 Just as a potsherd has my strength been dried out,/ and my tongue
cleaved to my throat ;/ You led me down to the dirt of death ;

V 16 About “*my tongue cleaved to my throat*” : see John 19:28.

✧ “*Cleaved*” is a translation of the Greek verb κολλάω, *kollaō*, meaning “to glue”, “to cement”. The French word “*coller*” is derived from this word.

✧ See the note on Psalm 62:9 ; see also Psalms 24:21 ; 100:3 ; 101:6 ; 118:25, 31.

✧ About “*death*” : Saint Augustine says : “It was a long-standing fact that mankind should die. However, so that it should not always happen to mankind, a new event occurred, that God died”.

✧ See the note about “*death*” on Psalm 6:6.

17 for many dogs surrounded me ;/ a gathering of those doing evil
encompassed me./ They pierced my hands and my feet.

V 17 About this verse (and the next two verses) : Saint Athanasius explains to us that the Prophet David gives us this verse and the next in the voice of Jesus the Christ at the time of His Passion and Crucifixion. He asks rhetorically what these verses can refer to except for the Cross of Christ.

✧ About “*dogs*” : Bishop Eusebius of Cæsarea tells us that “*dogs*” and the “*gathering of those doing evil*” serve as a metaphor for the rulers of the Jews : scribes, high priests, pharisees. They spurred the crowd to demand the crucifixion of Christ. Even if they had not fulfilled their duty to be life-giving shepherds, they could at least have served as proper sheep-dogs which protect the flock and warn it by barking. However, they behaved as mad dogs, and made the sheep wild through their barking.

✧ Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović), along with Saint Athanasius, explains to us that this verse and the following verses in particular are a very precise and specific prophecy about the Passion and Death of our Saviour, Jesus the Christ. He also shows us that in fact “*dogs*” refers to demons, and he gives examples about how demons often appear to ascetics in the form of dogs in order to frighten and distract them. Likewise, he shows us that it is these demonic and spiritual dogs which drove those

who were determined to exterminate Jesus Christ through crucifixion. They were driven, and thus our Saviour from the Cross said : “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*” (Luke 23:34).

✧ See verse 21 ; see also Philippians 3:2.

✧ About “*gathering of those doing evil ...*” : see verse 13 ; see also Matthew 27:27.

✧ About “*gathering*” : see the note about “*gathering*” on Psalm 7:8.

✧ About “*pierced*” : Cassiodorus reminds us that these words anticipate the crucifixion of Christ which was a historical event. Referring to 1 Corinthians 1:23, he emphasises that God suffered in the flesh. The Incarnation is the epitome of His mercy, an incomprehensible mystery, an incalculable gift.

✧ Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović) repeats for us the specificity of this prophecy in its fulfilment at the crucifixion of Jesus the Christ, in harmony with all the other specific prophecies. However, the devil had miscalculated. He intended to destroy Christ by death, but Christ is stronger than death. He intended to dishonour Him, but only Christ “*gives honour to every creature*”. Through His victorious Resurrection, our Saviour defeated death, the devil and all his demonic host (*dogs*), and He gave to us, the members of His Body, the authority to scatter them as smoke.

✧ See 5 Moses 28:66 ; Matthew 27:35 ; Mark 15:24 ; Luke 23:33 ; 24:40 ; John 19:18, 37 ; 20:25, 27. See also Zechariah 12:10 (Masoretic text).

18 They numbered all my bones ;/ they observed and looked upon me.

V 18 About this verse : Saint Augustine comments that “*numbered all my bones*” is an apt description of the stretching of the body of Christ upon the Cross as He was crucified. He continues by saying that those who “*observed*” looked but could not understand ; they watched but they could not see.

✧ See Isaiah 6:10 ; 43:8 ; Jeremiah 5:21 ; Ezekiel 12:2 ; Matthew 13:15 ; Mark 8:18 ; Acts 28:27.

✧ About “*observed*” : Cassiodorus reminds us that although the sun and the moon darkened, and the surrounding earth trembled at the crucifixion, the crucifiers surrounded Christ and angrily glared at Him in His suffering.

✧ See Matthew 27:36 ; Luke 23:35 ; John 19:37.

19 They distributed my clothes amongst themselves,/ and upon my cloak they cast lots.

V 19 About this verse : Saint John Chrysostom calls our attention to the exactness of this Davidic Prophecy regarding the details of the Crucifixion of Christ. Although three were crucified, these words apply only to Christ Himself. Saint John reminds us about the dividing of garments by the soldiers, and that the tunic (“*cloak*”) of Christ was not torn, but won by one of them through lottery.

- ✧ Saint Hilary of Poitiers supports Saint John's comment that these words refer to the Son of God.
- ✧ Bishop Eusebius of Cæsarea continues the application of this prophecy to those who would in later times similarly tear apart the glory of the Lord's pure words in the Scriptures. They did and do this through taking up various distorted opinions which misleading schools of heretical and rebellious thought invent.
- ✧ Saint Ambrose reminds us that "to God, the things that are to come are present, and for Him, who foreknows all things, they are as though they were past and over".
- ✧ This verse, as many other verses here and elsewhere, is a prophetic statement, which prepares for the future fulfilment at the time of our Saviour's Passion.
- ✧ See Matthew 27:35 ; Mark 15:24 ; Luke 23:34 ; John 19:23-24.

✧ About "*cast lots*" : in his commentary about Psalm 30:16, Saint Augustine refers to the seamless garment of Christ, and he explains that it was no accident that it was so fashioned. In itself, it refers to the eternal and heavenly love of God. He refers us to Colossians 1:12 in order to assure us that the development of the will of God for the good in each of us is implicitly understood regarding the one who received the garment, and it is likewise so for those who strive to know and to do the will of the Lord.

- ✧ This expression means to engage in lottery, to choose or to win by supposed chance. Another word used for this is "sortition", which is sometimes used in the choosing of candidates for a post or an office. This is a method sometimes used to determine the choice of heads of Churches or of dioceses or the membership of committees in the Church.
- ✧ See the note about "*lots*" on Psalm 30:16.

20 But You, O LORD, do not keep my help far away from me ;/
 give heed to my support.

V 20 About "*do not keep...me*" : Saint Augustine reminds us that the Father did not keep His help far away from Christ, but rather, He gave the Resurrection on the third day.

- ✧ About "*give heed to my support*", or "*give heed to my help*" : see Psalms 37:23 ; 39:14 ; 69:2 ; 70:12.
- ✧ About "*support*" : see the note on Psalm 3:4.

21 Rescue my soul from the sword,/ and my only-begotten one from the
 hand of the dog.

V 21 About this verse : Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) elaborates on the similar comments of Saint Augustine. He explains that Christ's only one is His Bride, the Church, that He holds in His arms. He recalls the saying of the Forerunner John : "*He who has the bride is the Bridegroom*" (John 3:29).

- ✧ See verse 17.

✠ About “*soul*” : see verse 30 ; see the note about “*soul*” on Psalm 3:3.

V 22 About “*mouth of the lion*” : Saint Augustine interprets the request as being for rescue from the clutches of the kingdom of this world.

✠ About “*humility*” : Saint Symeon the New Theologian teaches us that we cannot have understanding if we are not humble ; and that thus, if we are not humble, we lack understanding.

✧ See the note about “*humility*” on Psalm 35:10 ; see also Psalm 30:8 ; Daniel 3:28 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Luke 1:48 (Matins Canticle 9) ; see also the note about “*humiliation*” on Psalm 9:14.

✠ About “*the unicorn*” : Saint Augustine understands this as a request to be kept safe in humility from the pride of those who exalt themselves and keep others down.

23 I shall recount Your Name to my brothers ;/ in the midst of the church
shall I hymn You.

V 23 About “recount” : see the note of the explanation of Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) about “recount” on Psalm 18:2. The metropolitan further comments about this verse that in Hebrews 2:12, the Apostle Paul quotes these words written by King David, as though they were spoken by Jesus Christ Himself. Since Christ is the archetype, the first-fruits, the newly-appeared salvation of Man, those in the Church become His brethren through the sublime divine-human solidarity.

✧ See the note about “recount” on Psalm 9:2.

✧ About “brothers” : Saint Ambrose explains that our Saviour is our Lord by nature, and our brother by Grace.

✧ See John 17:6 ; 20:17.

✧ “Church” translates the Greek noun ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*, meaning “those called out”, “called apart”, or a particular sort of assembly (congregation) or gathering. In the “Old Testament”, this word refers to assemblies in the Temple with representatives from the whole people (see 5 Moses 16:16-17). The word implies being called out, called apart. Through Germanic roots, the word “church” is derived from this Greek word. *Ekklēsia* is used in the Psalter and in the “New Testament” on order to express those assemblies of faithful which are constitutive of the people, or the Church. In the “New Testament”, this word has a eucharistic context. The Church is manifested at the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharist, particularly when the bishop is presiding.

✧ Archimandrite Placide (Deseille) writes : “The Hebrew Bible had two terms to refer to the assembly of the people : *qahal*, and *edah*, which have been rendered by the Septuagint as ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* and συναγωγή, *synagōgē*. Both terms were almost synonymous ; however, *synagōgē* tended to refer rather to the community in its empirical aspect, sometimes having a pejorative meaning (being used even for animals). *Ekklēsia*, on the contrary, was referring more exclusively to Israel’s religious assemblies, and this as early as the desert period. Etymologically, the verb ἐκκαλέω, *ekkaleō*, “I call”, evokes the idea of a calling, of a convocation due to God’s initiative. Therefore, the vocabulary of the Septuagint is at the root of the name received by the community of Christ’s disciples in the New Testament. The word ‘synagogue’ is reserved for the Jews who had refused the Gospel”.

✧ See verse 26 ; see also Psalm 25:12 ; 34:18 ; 39:10 ; 67:27 ; 106:32 ; 109:1.

✧ About “shall I hymn You” : Cassiodorus points out that with this verse the tone of the psalm changes to that of praise.

✧ About “hymn” : see Psalm 70:8 ; see Matins Canticle 3 (Inscription) ; Daniel 3:51-56 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Daniel 3:57-88 (Matins Canticle 8). See also the note on Psalm 6:1 (noun).

24 O you, fearing the LORD, praise Him ;/ all you seed of Jacob,
glorify Him. /Let all the seed of Israel fear Him ;

V 24 About “praise” : Saint Augustine exhorts us not to praise ourselves, but to praise only the Lord.

✧ See the note on verse 26 ; see also the note on Psalm 8:3.

✧ Cassiodorus explains that the Prophet David begins this third part of the psalm so that the Faithful should not be disheartened in the midst of sadness. He reminds us that “fear of the Lord begets praise, confesses love, and fires the flames of charity”.

- ✧ About “*fearing the LORD*” : see verse 26 ; see also the note about “*fear*” on Psalm 14:4.
 - ✧ About “*seed*” : see verse 31 ; see also the note on Psalm 17:51.
 - ✧ About “*Jacob*” : see the note about “*Jacob*” on Psalm 13:7.
 - ✧ About “*glorify*” : see the note about “*glorify*” on Psalm 14:4.
 - ✧ About “*Israel*” : see the note about “*Israel*” on Psalm 13:7. This is a repetition for poetic intensification.
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25 for He neither reckoned as nothing, nor detested, the supplication
of the poor one, / nor did He turn away His Face from me ; / and when
I cried out to Him, He heard me.

V 25 About “*supplication*” : see the note on Psalm 5:3.

✧ About “*the poor one*” : Cassiodorus calls our attention to the “*poor*”, and who they are. These “*poor*” have rejected the world’s enticements, and they are hungry for the Lord’s Kingdom. They praise the Lord, while the rich praise themselves ; the “*poor*” grow rich on the abundance of Heaven, whereas the rich accumulate only earthly treasures ; the “*poor*” possess what they cannot lose, whereas the rich hold on to what the dead lose, and what the living often lose.

✧ See the note about “*the poor one*” on Psalm 9:19.

- ✧ About “*Face*” : see the note on Psalm 4:7.
- ✧ About “*cried out ... He heard me*” : see the note about “*cried out ... listen*” on Psalm 3:5.

✧ Saint Bede of Jarrow tells us that the Lord does not reject the prayer of the poor, when he entreats Him ; but rather, He will grant us to see His good things in the Land of the Living.

26 From You is my praise in the great church ; / I shall render my vows
before the face of those fearing Him.

V 26 About “*from You is my praise*” : this phrase indicates that it is in, by, and through the Lord that we are at all able to praise Him. It cannot be done merely by ourselves. He gives us the desire to praise Him, and when we take up that desire, He enables us to fulfil it.

- ✧ About “*praise*” : see the note on verse 4 ; see also the note on Psalm 8:3.
- ✧ About “*church*” : see the note on verse 23.
- ✧ About “*render ... vows*” : see Psalms 49:14 ; 55:13 ; 60:9 ; 64:2 ; 65:13 ; 75:12 ; 115:5, 9 ; 131:2 ; Job 22:27 ; Jonah 2:10 (Matins Canticle 6).

- ✠ About “*before the face*” :
 - ✠ About “*fearing Him*” : see the note on verse 24.
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27 The needy shall eat and be filled up ; /they shall praise the LORD —
 those seeking Him out ;/ their hearts shall live unto an age of an age.

V 27 About “*needy ... filled up*” : Bishop Eusebius of Cæsarea explains that we are the needy ones. We beggars regarding the things of God are fed on the Word of salvation with spiritual Bread. It is this food which brings us eternal life. Saint Augustine comments and preaches on this verse in a similar but metaphorical manner.

✧ Cassiodorus shows us that the “*poor*” are those who have scorned the enticements of this world, those who are hungry for God’s Kingdom, whose treasure is in Heaven.

✧ See Psalm 106:9 ; Matthew 11:5 ; Luke 1:53 (Matins Canticle 9, Part 1).

✠ About “*needy*” : see the note on Psalm 9:10.

✠ About “*seeking Him out*” : Clement of Alexandria comments that to make inquiries regarding God is salutary, because those who truly seek the Truth while praising Him shall be thereby transformed by the gift of knowledge, and their souls shall live eternally.

✧ See the note on Psalm 9:11.

✠ About “*their hearts shall live ... age*” : Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) writes that in the Hebrew text, the phrase is “*may their hearts live for ever*”. He interprets this phrase as a wish which concludes a ritual meal. The first two phrases are parallel synonyms : they are the same people. The “*needy*” are those who seek the Lord, eat and are satisfied at His table, who then receive praise and eternal life in their hearts. For a Christian, the text is a very transparent reference to Eucharistic Communion.

✧ See verse 30.

✠ About “*hearts*” : see the note about “*heart*” on Psalm 4:3.

✠ This verse is read (in the refectory of monasteries, and in homes) before the evening meal.

28 All the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn about towards the
 LORD ; /all the families of the nations shall worship before His Face ;

V 28 About “*ends of the earth*”, and “*nations*” : Bishop Eusebius of Cæsarea comments that here the Prophet proclaims the glorious post-Resurrection works of Christ as He gathers all the nations of the earth. These works are manifestly visible and confirm the truth of the words of this psalm [see Acts 2:1-11].

✧ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrus adds that not only one or two nations, but countless nations will hasten to the Lord and embrace the light of the knowledge of God.

✧ See Psalms 2:8 ; 71:8-11 ; 85:9 ; 97:3 ; Isaiah 44:22 ; 45:22 ; 52:10 ; Zechariah 14:16 ; Isaiah 49:23 ;

Jeremiah 16:19.

✠ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) comments that “*families of the nations*” are Gentile groups that each have a common descent.

✠ About “*nations*” : see verse 29 ; see the note about “*nations*” on Psalm 2:1.

✠ About “*worship*” : see verse 30 ; see also the note about “*worship*” on Psalm 5:8.

29 for the kingdom belongs to the LORD,/ and He it is who rules the nations.

V 29 Saint Augustine underlines that sovereignty belongs to the Lord, not to the proud. Lordship over the nations belongs to the Lord.

✠ About “*kingdom*” (earthly) : see Psalms 44:7 ; 45:7 ; 67:33 ; 78:6 ; 104:13 ; 134:11 ; Obadiah 1:21 ; Daniel 7:23 ; Apocalypse 11:15.

✠ About “*rules*” : see Psalms 58:14 ; 65:7 ; 88:10 ; 102:19.

✠ About “*nations*” : see verse 28.

30 All the opulent on the earth have eaten, and have worshipped ;/
 before His Face shall fall down all who are going down to the earth./
 My soul lives for Him,

V 30 About “*opulent*” : the Greek word *πίων*, *piōn* (related to the Latin word *pinguis*) is translated as “fat”, “plump” for things, and “rich”, “wealthy” for human beings. Fatness and wealth historically go together with people.

✧ Saint Athanasius informs us that all the wealthy have eaten spiritual food, and that they are fat from being well-fed by the divine Hierarching. [See Psalm 62:6.]

✧ See 5 Moses 32:15 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Song of Songs 5:1.

✠ About “*worshipped*” : see the note on verse 28.

✠ About “*my soul lives for Him*” : see verse 27 ; see also Psalms 68:33 ; 118:175 ; Isaiah 55:3.

✠ About “*soul*” : see verse 21.

31 and my seed shall serve Him :/ the generation to come shall be
 announced to the LORD ;

V 31 About “*seed*” : see verse 24.

✠ Although the ecclesiastical Greek text reads thus, the Masoretic (Hebrew) text reads : “Men shall tell of the Lord to the coming generation”.

✠ About “*generation*” : see the note about “*generation*” on Psalm 9:27.

32 they shall announce His righteousness to a people who shall be born,/
whom the LORD has made.

V 32 About this verse : Saint Augustine comments that this proclamation of God’s righteousness will be preached by the Holy Evangelists to peoples who are yet to be born (born to the Lord by faith).

✧ Cassiodorus reminds us that the Son of God is the Righteousness of the Father (1 Corinthians 1:30). Therefore, righteousness must be preached to those who are yet to come and who are yet to believe. [See Romans 3:25.]

✠ About “*announce ... who shall be born*” : see Psalms 47:14-15 ; 70:18 ; 77:5-6 ; 101:19 ; John 17:19, 20.

✠ About “*peoples*” : see verse 7.

✠ About the whole psalm : Father P Reardon recapitulates and he explains to us that in the Gospel according to Mark, when our Lord speaks of His pending Passion, He also refers to the coming Resurrection (Mark 8:31 ; 9:31 ; 10:34). This psalm closes similarly, with a note of hope and victory.

O God, Summit of mercy, for our sake, You descended to the Virgin’s womb.

You were doomed to the Tree. You were pierced with nails.

Your clothes were divided by lot ; and You rose, free from the dead [Psalm 87:5].

We pray that You not forget this exchange,

You that snatched the peoples from the lion’s mouth,
and freed our fathers who of old trusted in You. — Roman
