PSALM 4

✠ This psalm is written in the form of a Lament.

✣ See the note about "lament" in the introduction to Psalm 3.

✠ This psalm is part of the Vespers session (kathisma) of Saturday evening. It is read fully at Great Compline. It is used (verse 2) as the Prokeimenon of Vespers on Monday evening. It is used (verse 7) as the Communion Hymn at the Divine Liturgy on the Third Sunday of Great Lent.

✣ This is a psalm for the end of the day (Compline), which has been used in the Benedictine Rule since the 6th century.

✠ Saint Athanasius advises us to sing Psalm 4 when we wish to give thanks at the end of affliction. He also recommends for this Psalms 74 and 115.

"*The Church exhorts Jews and pagans, to conversion*"

"*An evening prayer of trust in God*"

"*The sacrifice of righteousness*"

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1 For the End. In psalms. A canticle by David.

V 1 About the Inscription : in the Masoretic (Hebrew) text, the Inscription is : "To the choirmaster : with stringed instruments. A psalm of David".

✣ The New American Bible (NAB) mentions that "*To the choirmaster*" is a direction frequently found in the inscriptions in the Psalter. Although the precise meaning is unknown, it is generally accepted that this refers to a collection of psalms which bore this title (see the note on Psalm 6:1).

✠ About "*for the End*" : Saint Jerome comments that although the titles of the psalms are not the same in all Hebrew, Greek and Latin manuscripts, that, being an integral part of the Holy Scriptures, their importance should not be neglected. The phrase : "*for the End*" (εἰς τὸ τέλος, *eis to telos*), is met many times in the headings of psalms, and the psalm reveals the prophetic dimension. In this case, the "legacy" cannot be anything else than the Kingdom of God. Although the Jews that reckon they have acquired this legacy from the beginning, we Christians know that it will not come until the "end" of the ages, and that in the Church of Christ. Understanding the text : "*Christ is the end of the Law*" (Romans 10:4), can be helped by thinking that the end is found in the planting of the seed.

✣ Saint Augustine indicates that "*the End*" does not imply a termination or completion, but rather a bringing to perfection. Romans 10:4 indicates this with reference to Christ. He then says that in this psalm's inscription, and in all other psalms having this in the inscription, "the End" is to be understood as Christ. [He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning, and the End (see Apocalypse 1:8 ; 21:6 ; 22:13).]

✣ Τέλος, *telos* means not only "*end*", but it can also mean "target", "purpose", "goal", "deadline",

"achievement", "result", "fulness", "climax", "corollary", "perfection", "outcome", "conclusion", "completion", "totality".

✣ The great majority of the psalms that include "*For the End*" in the Inscription are attibuted to the Prophet David. There are some others which are attributed to the sons of Korah, and to Asaph, and one gives no attribution.

✣ See the notes about "*For the End*" on Psalms 10:1 ; 13:1 ; 15:11 ; see Psalms 5:1 ; 6:1 ; 8:1 ; 9:1 ; 11:1 ; 12:1 ; 17:1 ; 18:1 ; 19:1 ; 20:1 ; 21:1 ; 29:1 ; 30:1 ; 35:1 ; 38:1 ; 39:1 ; 40:1 ; 41:1 ; 43:1 ; 44:1 ; 45:1 ; 46:1 ; 48:1 ; 50:1 ; 51:1 ; 52:1 ; 53:1 ; 54:1 ; 55:1 ; 56:1 ; 57:1 ; 58:1 ; 59:1 ; 60:1 ; 61:1 ; 63:1 ; 64:1 ; 65:1 ; 66:1 ; 67:1 ; 68:1 ; 69:1 ; 71:1 ; 74:1 ; 75:1 ; 76:1 ; 79:1 ; 80:1 ; 83:1 ; 84:1 ; 87:1 ; 108:1 ; 138:1 ; 139:1 ; see also John 13:1 ; Apocalypse 2:26.

✠ About "*canticle*" : Saint Gregory of Nyssa reminds us that a canticle is a song of praise rendered to God for benefits bestowed. He also reminds us that the end of all struggles is victory ; and that once one has a taste of victory, more victories become possible. This victory is victory over evil.

✣ See Psalms 9:17 ; 29:1 ; 38:1 ; 41:9 ; 44:1 ; 64:1 ; 65:1 ; 68:31 ; 72:1 ; 75:1 ; 82:1 ; 86:1 ; 87:1 ; 90:1 ; 91:4 ; 92:1 ; 94:1 ; 95:1 ; 107:1 ; 136:1 ; 137:5 ; 143:9 ; Inscriptions of Matins Canticles 1, 2, 9 ; Habakkuk 3:19 (Matins Canticle 4).

[᾽Εν τῷ ἐπικαλεῖσθαί με Cum invocarem]

2 When I was calling, You heard me, O God of my righteousness./
In affliction, You have set me at large ;/ have compassion on me,
and hear my prayer.

V 2 About "*When I was calling, You heard me*" : Saint John Chrysostom says in his commentary that this statement urges us readily to call upon God. He cites the words of the Prophet Isaiah (58:9) : "*While you are still speaking, He will say, 'Behold, I am here'*". Saint John further says that God is always accessible (see Jeremiah 23:23). From our perspective, we often may suppose that He is far away ; however, we are always able to converse with Him ; there are no intervening impediments. He is always close by. We ought to show the Lord that we truly want to be heard since we know that He loves us. If we conform our lives to Him and to His love, then we are more likely to understand how to ask properly. Asking in a righteous manner, we will more likely be heard. We will understand that to be heard does not require a special technique of asking, but rather a state of loving humility and few words. God, Himself, teaches us how to approach Him. Saint John further exhorts us to adopt the attitude of the tax-collector in the Parable (see Luke 18:13). In our desire to be heard, we ought to stop taking Him for granted.

✣ See verse 4 ; see also the note about "*cried out ... listened*" on Psalm 3:5.

✣ Cassiodorus reminds us that frail humanity cannot on its own approach the Father. However, the Father [the Knower of Hearts] does, indeed, hear us even before we can ask as He shows His indulgence, kindness and mercy because of His love.

✣ See Isaiah 65:24 ; Matthew 6:8.

✠ About "*God*" : see the note about "*God*" on Psalm 3:3.

✠ About "*my righteousness*" : Saint John Chrysostom points out that King David is not boasting, but rather, he is affirming the source of his righteousness. Our righteousness is from God.

✣ About "*my* [his, your] *righteousness*" : see 1 Kingdoms 26:23 ; Psalms 7:9 ; 16:1 ; 17:21, 25 ; 34:27 ; 36:6 ; 111:3, 9 ; see the *Orthodox Study Bible* note about "*my righteousness*" on 5 Moses 9:4-6. See also the note about "*Your righteousness*" on Psalm 5:9.

✣ See also Jeremiah 23:6 : "*the Lord our Righteousness*" in which the messianic title additionally shows us that all our righteousness is derived from the Lord Himself.

✠ About "*righteousness*" : righteousness is living in conformity with God's love. This is much greater than mere justice, or conformity with the Law or laws.

✣ See verse 6 ; see 1 Kingdoms 2:10 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Psalms 9:9 ; 10:7 ; 16:15 ; 22:3 ; 39:10 ;

44:5, 8 ; 47:11 ; 50:21 ; 51:5 ; 57:2 ; 64:5 ; 71:2, 3, 7 ; 84:11, 12, 14 ; 88:15 ; 93:15 ; 95:13 ; 96:2 ; 97:9 ; 98:4 ; 105:3, 31 ; 110:3 ; 117:19 ; 118:75, 121, 138 172 ; 131:9 ; Isaiah 26:9, 10 (Matins Canticle 5) ; 33:15 ; Daniel 3:27 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Luke 1:75 (Matins Canticle 9, Part 2) ; 1 Corinthians 1:30. See the note about "*working righteousness*" on Psalm 14:2.

✠ About "*affliction*" : Saint John Chrysostom reminds us that the Lord did not and does not eliminate the afflictions. Instead, the Prophet David writes, "*In affliction You have set me at large*". That is to say : You did not eliminate the afflictions, but You have allowed them to remain. You have delivered me, and You have set me free. The Lord, in His inventiveness, resourcefulness, kindness and love, provides great relief from the afflictions while they are around. It is for us to keep in mind the burning fiery furnace and lions' den of the Prophecy of Daniel, for instance. In addition, Saint John points out that although the world tries to annoy us, He makes it be no annoyance to us. If we become distressed, disturbed and annoyed, it is our own fault that we have either let it happen or walked into it.

✣ Saint Didymus the Blind assures us that sometimes, instead of blocking a disaster or restraining the evil that is unleashed upon us, God offers us the courage to bear the disaster bravely.

✣ This word translates the Greek word θλῖψις, *thlipsis*, which primarily means "affliction", as used in this translation. However, the word may be used also for "anguish", "distress" or "oppression".

✣ See the notes on Psalms 137:7 ; 141:3 ; see also Psalms 9:10, 22 ; 19:2 ; 21:12 ; 24:17, 22 ; 31:7 ;

33:5, 7, 18, 20 ; 43:25 ; 49:15 ; 65:11 ; 76:3 ; 80:8 ; 85:7 ; 90:15 ; 106:39 ; 107:13 ; 114:3 ; 117:5 ; 118:143 ; 137:7 ; 141:3 ; 142:11 ; Jonah 2:3 (Matins Canticle 6) ; Habakkuk 4:16 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Isaiah 26:16 (Matins Canticle 5) ; Romans 5:3. About the verb, see the note on Psalm 3:2.

✠ About "*set ... at large*" : Saint Augustine comments that the Lord led him into the open fields of joy and gladness, away from the constraints of sorrow (see Romans 5:3-5). His heart does not subsist in a tiny corner despite the fact that his persecutors swarm him in an attempt to corner him.

✣ See Psalms the note about "*broad place*" on Psalm 17:20.

✠ About "*have compassion*" : Saint John Chrysostom comments that even though our good deeds may be numberless, it is rather because of the Lord's pity and loving-kindness that we are heard. We cannot earn this compassion, because God is Love. Rather, the good deeds are merely an expression of our love for Him. We are saved through His mercy. If we have been sinners, but we pray with humility and repentance, then we will truly benefit. In the case of the thief's repentance, only a word was sufficient to open Heaven (see Luke 23:43). Saint John reminds us about the need for balance in our life. Love for the

Lord, giving alms to those in need, and repentance for our sins and weaknesses are together very important. He reminds us that we must be cautious and reticent ever to accuse anyone else.

✣ See Psalms 36:21 ; 59:3 ; 66:2 ; 76:10 ; 101:14, 15 ; 102:13 ; 108:12 ; 122:2 ; 144:8.

See also Psalms 24:6 (noun) ; 85:15 (adjective).

✠ About "*prayer*" (noun) : Saint John Chrysostom explains that prayer constitutes a strong bond between us and God. It can even be voiceless, from the heart. He reminds us that both Moses and Hannah were thus heard. He adds that the more we are righteous, the more likely will our prayer be heard [because our heart then knows how to pray aright], and He will incline towards us. We therefore should approach Him in contrition, in uprightness, in peace, without any grudges, in humility and meekness, and speaking only what is good and righteous. He adds that our prayer should be restrained, kindly, gentle, calm. When we can make intercession for those who have abused us, it makes us resemble (as much as possible) our merciful King Himself (Matthew 5:44 ; Luke 6:36).

✣ Saint Isaac the Syrian tells us similarly that the purpose of prayer is to acquire love for God. He adds that in prayer, we can find many reasons to love God.

✣ See 1 Kingdoms 2:9 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Psalms 6:10 ; 16:1 ; 34:13 ; 38:13 ; 41:9 ; 53:4 ; 54:2 ; 60:2 ; 64:3 ; 65:20 ; 68:14 ; 79:5 ; 83:9 ; 85:1, 6 ; 87:3, 14 ; 89:1 ; 101:1, 2, 18 ; 108:7 ; 140:2, 5 ; 141:1 ; 142:1 ; Wisdom of Sirach 39:5 ; Jonah 2:8 (Matins Canticle 6) ; Habakkuk 3:16 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Daniel 6:11.

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3 O sons of Men, how long shall you be heavy of heart ?/ Why do you love futility, and seek a lie ?

Pause

V 3 About "*sons of men*" : see Psalms 10:4 ; 11:2, 9 ; 13:2 ; 30:20 ; 32:13 ; 35:8 ; 44:3 ; 48:3 ; 52:3 ; 56:5 ; 57:2 ; 61:10 ; 88:48 ; 89:3 ; 106:8, 15, 21, 31 ; 113:24 ; 144:12 ; 145:3 ; Daniel 3:82 (Matins Canticle 8).

✠ "*Men*", here, translates the plural of ἄνθρωπος, *anthrōpos*, the word for the race of human beings. We translate this word, *anthrōpos*, as "Man", or "Men", and *anēr* as "man", or "men". So far, English does not really have a satisfactory single word, or word-form, to describe the human race. One cannot with the ear hear the difference between a man, and Mankind, as it were, when both sound the same, and are expressed by the same English word. With regard to sensitivities about gender, it is important to understand, when reading, that the writer was using the natural idiom of the Time. Our place is to understand that, whether the word used be *anthrōpos* (Man, Mankind), or *anēr* (a man), or other words, the texts are to be taken as referring to us all : male, and female, alike. Nevertheless, although it is argued by some that *anēr* and *anthrōpos* are used differently (Liddell and Scott gives the example of Herodotus "many human beings (*anthrōpoi*), but few men (*andres*)"), in Gingrich and Bauer's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, it is clarified that, in the Psalter at least, these words can be used interchangeably. *Anēr*, for instance, is used only nine Times ; and it is used, sometimes, in the same verse as *anthrōpos*, referring to the same person. We nevertheless retain the distinction between them in this work.

✣ Saint Nicholas Cabasilas wrote : "Even at the Time of creation it was He who was the Archetype".

✣ Father Patrick Reardon wrote : "Christ is what God had in mind when He reached down and formed that first lump of mud into a man".

✣ Father J Behr, in his *The Mystery of Christ*, refers to the assertion of Saint Nicholas Cabasilas that Christ is the first true Human Being in history, and that all humans before Him were in anticipation of Him.

✠ About "*how long*" : see the notes on Psalm 12:2, 3 ; see Psalms 61:4 ; 73:10 ; 79:5 ; 81:2 ; Apocalypse 6:10. See the note about "*until when*" on Psalm 6:4.

✠ About "*heavy of heart*" : Saint John Chrysostom explains that such a heart can also be called a heart of clay when our focus is on the earth. It implies being weighed down with earthly cares, instead of rising to divine contemplation [see Luke 21:34 ; Colossians 3:2]. The heart ought not to be shackled to anything that weighs us down (and distorts our true nature), but rather be furnished with fire and light, which, like feathers, enable flight to the heights.

✠ About "*heart*" : this word does not refer simply to the physical organ, but rather to the innermost and essential part of the human being (or even of anything). It is considered to be the centre of a person's thoughts and emotions, especially love or compassion, but it is also associated with courage. It is associated by the spiritual fathers with the "nous" (which is often mistakenly limited to the intellect). The "nous" is the eye of the soul. The soul of a human being, created by God, is intelligent and noetic. Saint Thalassios taught that God created beings with a capacity to receive the Holy Spirit, and to attain knowledge of Him.

✣ See verses 5, 8 ; see 1 Kingdoms 2:1 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Psalms 5:10 ; 7:10, 11 ; 9:2, 27, 32, 34 , 38 ; 10:2 ; 11:3 ; 12:3, 6 ; 13:1 ; 14:2 ; 15:9 ; 16:3 ; 18:9, 15 ; 19:5 ; 20:3 ; 21:15, 27 ; 23:4 ; 24:14 ; 25:2 ; 26:3 ; 26:8, 14 ; 27:3, 7 ; 30:13, 25 ; 31:5, 11 ; 32:15, 21 ; 33:19 ; 34:25 ; 35:11 ; 36:4, 14, 15, 31 ; 37:9, 11 ; 38:4 ; 39:9, 11, 13 ; 40: 7 ; 43:19, 22 ; 44:2, 6 ; 45:3 ; 47:14 ; 48:4, 15 ; 50:12, 19 ; 52:2 ; 54:5, 22 ; 56:8 ; 57:3 ; 60:3 ; 61:5, 9, 11, 13 ; 63:7, 11 ; 65:18 ; 72:1, 7, 13, 21, 26 ; 73:8 ; 75: 6 ; 76:7 ; 77:8 , 18, 37, 72 ; 80:13 ; 83:3, 6 ; 84:9 ; 85:4, 12 ; 89:12; 93:15, 19 ; 94l8, 10 ; 96:11 ; 100:2, 3, 5 ; 101:5 ; 103:15 ; 104:3, 25 ; 106:12 ; 107:2 ; 108:16, 22 ; 110:1, 7, 8 ; 118:2, 7, 10, 11, 32, 34, 36, 58, 69, 70, 80, 111, 112, 128, 145, 161 ; 124:4 ; 142:4 ; 146:3 ; Habakkuk 3:16 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Jonah 2:4 (Matins Canticle 6) ; Daniel 3:41 (Matins Canticle 7) ; 3:87 (Matins Canticle 8) ; Luke 1:51 (Matins Canticle 9, Part 1).

✠ About "*love*" : this translates the Greek verb ἀγαπάω, *agapaō*, which means "God loving Man, and Man loving God" ; "loving without self-interest". There are other, more casual meanings, such as here.

✣ See 5 Moses 32:15 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 5:12 ; 10:5, 7 ; 17:2 ; 25:8 ; 28:6 ; 30:24 ; 32:5 ; 33:13 ; 36:28 ; 39:17 ; 44:8 ; 46:5 ; 50:8 ; 51:5, 6 ; 68:37 ; 69:5 ; 77:36, 68 ; 86:2 ; 96:10 ; 98:4 ; 108:4, 5, 17 ; 114:1 ; 118:47, 48, 97, 113, 119, 127, 132, 140, 159, 163, 165, 166, 167 ; 121:6 ; 144:20 ; 145:8 ; Daniel 3:35 (Matins Canicle 7).

✠ About "*futility*" (noun) : "*futility*" translates ματαιότης, *matæotēs*, in this Psalter. This word in Greek, in its various forms and combinations, is usually translated by others nowadays as "vanity". However, "emptiness", "purposelessness" are included in the meanings given by Liddell and Scott. In the *Analytical Lexicon to the Septuagint* by Bernard Taylor, the noun is translated as "emptiness", "folly". "Meaningless", "false", "foolish" are possible translations of the Greek adjectival form. "Vanity" has come in modern Times to connote mere narcissism. "Futility" still carries an understanding closer to the Greek meaning of

emptiness.

✣ Saint John Chrysostom comments that *matæotēs* describes what is empty : glory, wealth, power. There is something in name, but nothing in substance.

✣ See Psalms 11:3 ; 23:4 ; 25:4 ; 30:7 ; 37:13 ; 38:6 ; 39:5 ; 51:9 ; 61:10 ; 77:33 ; 118:37 ; 138:20 ; 143:4, 8, 11 ; Ecclesiastes 1:2. See also the note about "*futile*" (adjective) on Psalm 5:10.

✠ About "*seek a lie*" : Saint Augustine asks us : "*Why do you ... seek a lie ?*" He also asks : "What sort of lie do you look for ?" He responds that people do search for "happiness", but he asks us what does or can make us happy. Gold cannot make us happy. Exaltation, power, honour and triumph in this life do not bring happiness. Any worldly pursuits which are focussed only on the earth and the earthly are fruitless because nothing at all that is of the earth can make us happy, because these things are all deception and lies.

✠ About "*seek*" : the primary Greek word is ζητέω, *zēteō*, "seek", "seek for", "seek after", "inquire after", "seek out". The Greek text has a richness of meaning which can sometimes require in English the use of additional words in order to convey the subtle differences of meaning. Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) supplies two such possibilities : "to seek to meet", "to seek to know".

✣ See Psalms 23:6 ; 26:8 ; 33:15 ; 34:4 ; 36:10, 25, 32 ; 37:13 ; 39:15, 17 ; 68:7 ; 69:3, 5 ; 70:13, 24 ; 82:17 ; 103:21 ; 104:3, 4 ; 118:176 ; Jeremiah 5:1 ; Isaiah 55:6 ; Daniel 3:41 (Matins Canticle 7). See also the note about "*seeking You out*" on Psalm 9:11.

✠ About "*a lie*" (falsehood) : see Psalms 5:7 ; 57:4 ; 58:13.

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4 Know that the LORD made wonderful His holy one./ The LORD will hear me when I cry out to Him.

V 4 About "*know ... made wonderful*" : Saint Augustine reminds us that after all the suffering and death of our Lord, God raised Him from the dead. Thus, God has magnified his Holy One. Saint Augustine exhorts us to keep our focus on this Resurrection, this Magnification, this work of love. Only living with this in our hearts and minds can bring contentment.

✣ Although very many manuscripts use these words, the Masoretic text reads "set apart for Himself".

✣ See Psalms 15:3 ; 16:7 ; 30:22 ; 138:6 ; see also the note on Psalms 8:2 (adjective), 9:2 (noun).

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

✠ About "*holy one*" : the word for holy may have referred originally to the Prophet David, but it is understood to refer to Christ. "Holy one", or "holy" translates the Greek word ὅσιος, *hosios*. In Latin, the word used is *sanctus*, and in Hebrew it is *hasid*. Following the example of the old Latin version of the Vulgate, we translate *hosios* by "holy one", without making any difference from the word ἅγιος, *hagios*, for which in this Psalter we also use "holy one" (see Psalm 67:36 ; see also the note on Psalm 19:3). English does not have an exact equivalent, nor does French.

✣ Saint John Chrysostom reflects on the holy ones of the Old Testament (Noah, Abraham, Isaac,

Jacob and others) and how the world was instructed by their examples, and for whom the Lord wrought wonders.

✣ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) writes that the Greek word *hosios* can also mean "right", "godly", "pious". However, its primary connotation is much closer to the realm of holiness.

✣ In the case of every example of a holy person, the Lord has saved His holy one who had repented, done good, and become righteous. The result of this has been the encouragement, repentance and possible salvation of those near them.

✣ See 2 Moses 15:11 (Matins Canticle 1) ; Psalms 15:3, 10 ; 29:5 ; 30:24 ; 31:6 ; 33:10 ; 49:5 ; 51:11 ; 66:36 ; 76:14 ; 78:2 ; 82:4 ; 84:9 ; 88:6, 8 ; 96:10 ; 105:16 ; 109:3 ; 115:6 ; 131:9, 16 ; 144:10 ; 148:14 ;

149:1, 5, 9 ; 150:1 ; Habakkuk 3:3 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Daniel 3:25 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Daniel 3:87 (Matins Canticle 8) ; Mark 1:24 ; Luke 1:70 (Matins Canticle 9, Part 2). See also the note about "*holy one*" on Psalm 11:2.

✠ About "*will hear ... cry out*" : because I have experience that the Lord hears, I do, indeed, will to cry out to Him.

✣ Saint John Chrysostom explains that the Lord does not always seem to hear, because of the inappropriateness of our request. In such a case, it is better not to be heard than to be heard. The Lord understands when to give, and what to give. However, "be heard" in this context only means the granting of the request. God always does actually hear and listen, and He does everything for the good. If we constantly cry out to Him, He will be our Ally and our Helper, and He will be beside us at all Times.

✣ See the note on verse 2. See also the note about "*cried out*" and "*listened*" on Psalm 3:5.

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5 Be angry, but do not sin ;/ for what you say in your hearts,/
on your beds be pierced with compunction.

Pause

V 5 About "*be angry*" (human) : Saint John Chrysostom comments that righteous anger can be useful for a righteous reason, expressing care, and correcting sin. It must be kept in its place, and not become irrational, nor become a passion. Therefore, let us not be rashly angry. If we are imitating God, then anger must not be a passion. In another place, Sant John cautions us that no matter how just our words may be, if they are spoken in anger, we ruin everything. He expands further on this subject. If we fail to master anger on the first day, then we risk having to live with it for the next day, or even for a year. Anger can lead us (through suspicion) to believe that words spoken in one sense are actually meant in another sense. This suspicion can be extended to the misinterpreting of gestures and of every little thing. He cautions us to be angry with the devil, but not with any fellow-member of Christ's Body. The Lord armed us with anger not that we might injure ourselves or other humans, but that we might defeat the devil. In addition, he explains that the demon does not fear the one who can drive him out of a person or place as much as he fears the one who controls anger, and who is victorious over temper. To be angry is to be more wretched than the one who is possessed, because expressing anger expels us from the Kingdom of

Heaven.

✣ Saint Athanasius the Great recommends that if we do give way to anger, then we ought to lead it into silence, with a silent compunction of heart.

✣ Saint Ambrose interprets that it is better to find praise for exercised mercy than for having exercised vengeance.

✣ Saint Jerome wrote that to be angry is human ; to put an end to one's anger is Christian.

✣ Saint John Cassian comments that with regard to anger, we are obliged first to pay close attention to our Saviour's words in Matthew 5:22 : "*whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgement*". He also refers us to 1 John 3:15 : "*Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him*". These words are but an extension of the Dominical words about adultery in Matthew 5:28 : "*I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*". Saint John Cassian exhorts us to refrain not only from the outward expression of anger, but from any angry, rancorous or malicious thought. He further exhorts us to cut off the roots of the plant of anger, not merely the branches and fruits. When we murder our brother in our minds, the Lord sees this more clearly than others see the blood shed by a physical murder. If we do not remove every spark of anger whatsoever, then the remaining spark can bring about a conflagration. We cannot dare to indulge the thought that we could ever have so-called "righteous anger". Elsewhere, he says that regardless of what provokes anger, anger blinds the eyes of the soul, and inhibits it from seeing the Son of Righteousness.

✣ Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović) perceives that we may "be angry and sin not". He says that anger in its proper place acts as mercy does in its place. The anger of a friend to a friend or a parent to a child is not a storm that uproots a tree, but rather a wind that strengthens the tree. The bad fruit falls off, and the remaining good fruit can become better. Anger is to be controlled so that it may heal and not poison. If our will is set firmly in God's Law, it will be possible to use anger in conformity with His will and His love.

✣ Abba Evagrius said that anger is by nature designed for waging war with the demons and for struggling with every sort of sinful pleasure. Therefore the angels, who arouse in us spiritual delight and give us a taste of its blessedness, incline us to direct our anger against the demons. However, the demons, who lure us towards worldly passions, press us to use anger in order to fight with others. This behaviour is against nature, and thus the mind, thus stupefied and darkened, becomes a stranger to virtue.

✣ Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) suggests that we be angry at the sin, but love the sinner.

✣ Abbot Tryphon (Parsons) wrote : "The Fathers tell us that whenever anyone takes God's Name in vain, the ramifications reverberate throughout the entire cosmos. However insignificant we may think our uttered angry words may be, they impact the whole of God's universe. Redemption is not just about us, but the whole of the universe. My salvation and your salvation are interconnected. When a Christian falls into such sin it is especially tragic, for there are many non-believers who guard their words better than many who profess Christ. We must strive by every means to preserve peace of soul and not allow ourselves to be disturbed by offences from others. In every way we must strive to restrain anger and remain attentive to the mind and heart. We must make every effort to bear the offences and insults of others, and accustom ourselves to such a

disposition of spirit that their offences do not concern us. By guarding our thoughts, we can give quietness to our heart and make it a dwelling for God Himself. Abba Nilus said : 'Prayer is the seed of gentleness and the absence of anger'. If we truly be of Christ we have the means to change, for it is because we have Christ in us that victory over the passions can be ours. There is simply no excuse for a Christian to lose his temper".

✣ See Psalms 9:25 (noun) ; 34:20 (noun) ; 36:8 (noun) ; 54:4 (noun) ; 111:10 (verb) ; 137:7 (noun) ; Proverbs 16:30 ; Ephesians 4:26 (verb) ; James 1:19, 20 (noun).

✠ About "*sin*" : this word translates the Greek verb ἁμαρτάνω, *hamartanō*, which means "to sin", "to err", "to miss the mark".

✣ See 5 Moses 32:5 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 24:8 ; 35:2 ; 38:2 ; 40:5 ; 50:6 ; 74:5 ; 77:17, 32 ; 105:6 ; 118:11 ; Daniel 3:29 (Matins Canticle 7). See also the note about "*sin*" (noun) on Psalm 9:36. See also the note about "*sinner*" on Psalm 1:1.

✠ About "*hearts*" : see the note on verse 3.

✠ About "*pierced with compunction*" : Saint John Chrystostom urges us, when we daily lie peacefully on our beds, to summon the tribunal of our conscience and to demand of it a settling of accounts. This can help us not to fall again into sin, and it can open a door to repentance and healing from the Lord. He further reminds us about the previous exhortation in this verse not to sin in anger. However, when we fall into that temptation, then the healing remedy is found in compunction. Thus King David offers both preventative and healing medication.

✣ Saint Basil the Great comments that examining our past actions is a great help towards not falling again into the same mistakes. He asks that we keep this psalm-verse (5) in mind. See Matthew 5:28 ; Luke 6:45.

✣ Saint Augustine notes that some follow an alternative version of the psalm, in which the different Greek word could mean "be open", instead of "*be pierced*" (which is the meaning of the word in the received text). Nevertheless, his explanation is still worth considering. Piercing, after all, does include a certain amount of opening. He suggests that this relates to the widening of the heart that is required to receive the inpouring of love through the Holy Spirit.

✣ Saint John Cassian urges us that, when we have been troubled by noise and disturbance and when thoughts rush in on us, we amend them with wholesome sorrow as we repose on our beds.

✣ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) writes that anger may be in our own human nature, but it is sin to extend and enhance it. Therefore, the Prophet David, in this verse, exhorts us to gather our thoughts and to repent of what sin is within them before we go to bed in the evening. Forgiving others is a necessary element of this preparation for sleep.

✣ See Psalm 29:13.

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6 Sacrifice a sacrifice of righteousness,/ and hope on the LORD.

V 6 About "*sacrifice of righteousness*" : Saint Athanasius encourages us to obtain righteousness, to do righteousness, and to offer it in sacrifice to God. See 5 Moses 33:19 ; Psalm 50:21.

✣ Saint John Chrysostom comments that in the psalms we can see the life of the Church sketched out ahead of Time. In this line, the Prophet David speaks of righteousness not as though it were a partial virtue. We call people righteous who have the whole of virtue within them. Mere abstinence from doing evil is insufficient without the cultivation of doing good. (See Matthew 25:41-46.) He continues to reflect that looking for righteousness and doing righteous things wherever we are at whatever Time enables a sacrificial offering of goodness.

✠ About "*sacrifice*" : this word translates the Greek verb θύω, *thyō*. The essential meaning is to make an offering of something, to slaughter as an offering ; to surrender or give up, or permit injury or disadvantage to, for the sake of something else ; to dispose of (goods, property, and the like) regardless of profit.

✣ See 5 Moses 32:17 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 26:6 ; 49:14 ; 53:8 ; 105:37, 38 ; 106:22 ; 115:8 ; Jonah 2: 10 (Matins Canticle 6).

✠ About "*sacrifice*" (noun) : this word translates the Greek noun θυσία, *thysia*. The essential meaning is "the act of offering", "sacrificial food", "meat offering", "the animal victim offered".

✣ See 5 Moses 32:38 (Matins Canticle 2) ; 33:19 ; Psalms 19:4 ; 26:6 ; 39:7 ; 49:5, 8, 14, 23 ; 50:18, 19, 21 ; 95:8 ; 105:28 ; 106:22 ; 115:8 ; 140:2 ; Daniel 3:38, 40 (Matins Canticle 7).

✠ About "*righteousness*" : see the note on verse 2.

✠ About "*hope on the Lord*" : Saint John Chrysostom encourages us by saying that the power of hope (*i.e.* trust) in the Lord, is great. It is an invincible fortress, an unscalable rampart, an insurmountable reinforcement, a peaceful harbour, an invulnerable tower, an irresistible weapon, an insuperable power, which can find a refuge where none seems possible. He says that hope and trust in God transform everything, whether it be prison, hunger, or danger. Because of the power that goes with trust in the Lord, wild animals become tame. Hope in the Lord is stronger than any restraint, cage or fence. He further comments that we have nothing to fear when we hope on the Lord. The might of the all-transforming Lord makes an opposing army as easy to wipe away as a spider's web. He also says that to hope on the Lord is no small virtue. To trust the Lord requires detaching ourselves from everything and focussing our hearts and minds on Him alone. Instead of paying attention to the transient and changeable things, we direct our attention to Him who is unchangeable, steady, firm, immovable, inalterable. This hope itself is unchangeable, steady, firm, immovable, inalterable.

✠ About "*hope*" : this word translates the Greek verb ἐλπίζω, *elpidzō*, which means "to hope", "to hope for", "to expect".

✣ See the note on Psalm 129:6. See Psalms 5:12 ; 7:2 ; 9:11 ; 12:6 ; 15:1 ; 16:7 ; 17:3, 31 ; 20:8 ; 21:5, 6, 9 ; 24:20 ; 25:1 ; 26:3 ; 27:7 ; 30:2, 7, 15, 20, 25 ; 31:10 ; 32:18, 21, 22 ; 33:9, 23 ; 35:8 ; 36:3, 5, 40 ; 37:16 ; 39:4 ; 40:10 ; 41:6, 12 ; 42:5 ; 43:7 ; 51:10 ; 54:24 ; 55:4, 5, 12 ; 56:2 ; 61:9, 11 ; 63:11 ; 68:4 ; 70:1, 14 ; 77:22 ; 83:13 ; 85:2 ; 90:2, 4, 14 ; 11:7 ; 113:17, 18, 19 ; 117:9 ; 118:42 ; 130:3 ; 140:8 ; 142:8 ; 143:2 ; 144:15 ; 146:11 ; Romans 8:24-25. See the note about "*put his hope*" on Psalm 51:9. See also the note about "*hope*" (noun) on verse 9 of this psalm. Hope springs from love.

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7 Many say : "Who shall show us good things ?"/ The light of

Your Face, O LORD, has been signed upon us.

V 7 About "*show us good things*" : Saint John Chrysostom believes that it is the crowd of confused human creatures who can ask such a question as this. These are the ones who have given themselves over to earthly and worldly pleasures and luxuries, influence, reputation and money. They circumvent truth and wisdom and reality. They struggle at midday to see the brightness of the sun and they call the light itself into question. Thus they distort God's Providence. Nevertheless, although there are both good and bad people, the Lord makes the sun shine and the rain fall on each one. See Matthew 5:45.

✣ As Saint John Chrysostom intimates, "*good things*", especially with regard to the future life in the Kingdom, refers beyond particular items or events to the utter blessedness of being in the presence of the Lord and being nurtured by His love (whether in this life or the next).

✠ About "*good things*" : see Psalms 24:13 ; 26:13 ; 38:3 ; 64:5 ; 83:12 ; 102:5 : 106:9 ; 121:9 ; Luke 1:53 (Matins Canticle 9, Part 1).

✠ About "*the light of Your Face ... upon us*" : Saint John Chrysostom comments that the Prophet David uses "*light*" to convey support, providence, solicitude, assistance. He also points out that the light shining from the Face of the Lord cannot be missed nor ignored. Likewise, when the Lord's light shines from the faces of human beings, it cannot be ignored nor missed.

✣ Saint Augustine explains that this light is the complete and true good of mankind. He refers to the Uncreated Light. He adds that "*signed upon us*" reminds us of the stamping of a coin with the imprint of a person, and in our case, that of God (1 Moses 1:26). Each of us has obfuscated this image by sinning. Through baptism, we are born again, completely renewed and restored to the clarity and beauty of the image in which we were "minted". He further relates this to the event in Matthew 22:20-21.

✣ Saint Bede of Jarrow reminds us that the purpose of the Incarnation of Christ was precisely to renew in us the clarity of His image.

✣ Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović) reminds us that the answer to this question (which has always been asked by fallen humans) is given in the same verse : it is the Lord Himself who shows us all the good. He shines the light of His Face on us, and through this shining which is rooted in our hearts, it is possible for us to see what is good. It is only because of the Incarnation of Christ, and everything that accompanied this act of supreme humility, that the earth is able to show what is good. Without Him, and the acts of His love, the earth is incapable of revealing His light and His goodness.

✣ See the Kontak of the Feast of Theophany.

✣ See 4 Moses 6:25 ; Psalms 30:17 ; 43:4 ; 66:2 ; 79:4, 8, 20 ; 88:16 ; 89:8 ; 118:135 ; Daniel 9:17 ;

2 Corinthians 3:18-4:6.

✠ About "*face*" : "*face*" translates the Greek πρόσωπον, *prosōpon*, meaning, fundamentally, "face", or "person", or "presence", therefore suggesting the whole person. It may even refer to the being of the person. The root of the Greek word is ὤπς, *ōps*, which means "eye", "face", "countenance".

✣ See the notes about "*Face*" on Psalms 9:4 ; 10:7 ; see also 5 Moses 32:20 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 9:32 ; 12:2 ; 15:11 ; 16:2, 15 ; 17:9 ; 20:7, 10 ; 21:25 ; 23:6 ; 26:8, 9 ; 29:8 ; 30:17, 21 ; 33:1, 6, 17 ;

34:5 ; 37:4, 6 ; 41:3, 6, 12 ; 42:5 ;43:4, 16, 17, 25 ; 44:3 ; 49:21 ; 50:11, 13 ; 67:3, 4, 6, 9 ; 68:8, 18 ; 77:55 ; 79:4, 8, 17, 20 ; 81:2 ; 82:17 ; 83:10 ; 87:15 ; 88:15, 16, 24 ; 89:8 ; 94:2 ; 95:9, 13 ; 96:5 ; 101:3, 11 ;

103:15, 29, 30 ; 104:4 ; 113:7 ; 118:58, 135 ; 131:10 ; 138:7 ; 139:14 ; 142:7 ; 147:6 ; Habakkuk 3:5 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Daniel 3:41 (Matins Canticle 7) . See also the note on Psalm 35:3 with regard to the preposition derived from a different root, which is translated in this Psalter as "*before ... face*".

✠ About "*has been signed*": Archimandrite Placide (Deseille) comments that the "sign" is the Image of God imprinted in the soul (see 1 Moses 1:26), the Sign of the Cross which is marked in baptism on the Christian. Thus, to these words we reflexively respond in our hearts : "*As many as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ*" (Galatians 3:27), which may reveal the reflection of the Uncreated Light on the soul, perceived in contemplation.

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8 You gave gladness to my heart :/ because of the fruit of their wheat, wine and oil, they have multiplied.

V 8 About "*gladness*" (noun) : Saint John Chrysostom comments that the Lord has given the gift of gladness of heart. Within this gift is love of wisdom, and knowledge about what is enduringly true. With this comes the support of joy and hope and anticipation of the Kingdom of Heaven (see 1 Corinthians 2:9).

✣ Saint Augustine adds that gladness of heart cannot be found outside the heart, but only within, since it is the Lord's gift, and the Light of the Face of the Lord is stamped there. He further cites the Gospel (Luke 17:21) as he says that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us.

✣ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) suggests that all the Hebrew version translations converge on the point that the joy that communion with God gives to humans is much greater than that offered by abundant harvests.

✣ See the note about "*gladness*" on Psalm 15:11 ; see also 1 Macabbees 4:56, 58 ; Psalms 29:12 ; 44:16 ; 50:10 ; 57:4 ; 96:11 ; 99:2 ; 104:43 ; 105:50 ; 125:3 ; 136:6. See also the note about "*be glad*" on Psalm 5:12.

✠ About "*they have multiplied*" : Saint Augustine reflects on two aspects : the one and the many, or multiplicity and simplicity, as they are found expressed in this verse and the following verse. Here, "*their*" is not redundant. The one rejoices in his heart about God. The many rejoice about their abundance and their fruitfulness as they focus on things. Because of their obsession with their abundance, they are incapable of seeking the Lord in simplicity of heart (Wisdom of Solomon 1:1). [See Ephesians 6:5 ; Colossians 3:22.]

✣ Archimandrite Placide (Deseille) comments that this is an amphibological expression, which may signify either "*they have multiplied*", "they have become numerous", or, in a more spiritual sense, "they have become multiples". This means that they have lost the simplicity of heart through their attachment to earthly goods.

✣ See also Joel 2:24 for a different perspective.

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9 In peace I shall both lie down and sleep,/ for it is You alone,
O LORD, who have made me settle in hope.

V 9 About "*peace*" : Saint John Chrysostom mentions that by the Lord's Providence this peace enables us to have no fear of anything, not even the devil. Thus unperturbed, through this Divine Peace we are able to withstand all attacks and setbacks (see Psalm 118:165). This peace comes through our knowledge of God and through goodness. Thus, we can be the most cheerful of people, not distressed by poverty, illness or any other negative thing. If we turn away from the Lord's peace, we become our own worst enemy. He says that there is no difficulty so great that it is not rendered easy through hope in the Lord's love. Every passing affliction prepares us for a measureless, eternal weight of glory. See 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. He goes so far as to say that it is possible for every believer to find the silence and peace of the desert in the centre of a populous city, and he exhorts us to do so.

✣ Saint Augustine's opinion is that profound, Divine Peace is not for the present, but rather to be hoped for in the Kingdom of Heaven.

✣ See Psalms 28:11 ; 33:15 ; 34:27 ; 36:11 ; 37:4 ; 40:10 ; 54:19 ; 71:3, 7 ; 75:3 ; 84:9, 11 ; 118:165 ; 119:7 ; 121:6, 7, 8 ; 124:5 ; 127:6 ; 147:3 ; Isaiah 26:12 (Matins Canticle 5) ; Luke 1:79 (Matins Canticle 9, Part 2).

✠ About "*I shall both lie down and sleep*" : Saint Didymus the Blind, Bishop Eusebius of Cæsarea and Saint Augustine treat this future resting as being hoped for and possible only in the Kingdom of Heaven. They attribute the present disasters and calamities of life as being the impediment of this rest.

✣ See the notes about "*lie down*" and "*sleep*" on Psalm 3:6.

✠ About the placement of "*alone*" : Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) informs us that the Ethiopian version gives : "For Thou, LORD, enablest me to live trustfully alone". He and many others follow this same order. However, this present translation follows the Septuagint Greek word order.

✠ About "*hope*" (noun) : Saint John Chrysostom explains that there is no difficulty which cannot become easy through "*hope*" in God. We look up and forward to what is eternal. He refers us to 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.

✣ This word translates the Greek word ἔλπις, *elpis*, which means "hope", "expectation".

✣ See Psalms 13:6 ; 15:9 ; 21:10 ; 39:5 ; 59:10 ; 60:4 ; 61:8 ; 64:6 ; 70:5; 72:28 ; 77:7, 53 ; 90:9 ; 93:22 ; 107:10 ; 141:6 ; 145:5. See also the note about "*hope*" on verse 6 of this psalm.

O Lord, You alone are magnified amongst the peoples.
Listen to us, and have mercy on us in the midst of our tribulations ;
and bestow spiritual joy upon those established in the hope of future gifts. — Roman

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