PSALM 11

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

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

✠ This psalm (verses 2, 8) is used as the Prokeimenon of the Sunday Divine Liturgy in Tone 5. It is used (verse 6) as the Prokeimenon of Sunday Matins in Tone 1. It is used (verses 2, 8) as the first Prokeimenon of the Wednesday Presanctified Liturgy in the First Week of Great Lent. It is used (verses 2, 8) as the Prokeimenon of the Divine Liturgy of the Second Sunday of Great Lent.

✠ Saint Athanasius explains to us that this psalm (as Psalm 10) expresses our own faith and prayer.

"*Supplication against the deceptive world, and announcing of salvation*"

"*The safety of the poor and needy*"

"*Faith in the truth of God's promises*"

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1 For the End. About the Ogdoad (Eighth). A psalm by David.

V 1 About the Inscription : in the Masoretic (Hebrew) text, the Inscription is : "To the choirmaster : according to the Sheminith. A psalm of David". Some versions lack "*according to the Sheminith*". See the note on Psalm 6:1.

✠ About "*for the End*" : see the note about "*for the End*" on Psalm 4:1.

✠ About "*the Eighth*" : *The Orthodox Study Bible* stresses the importance of understanding "*the Eighth*" in the context of the Eighth Day, which is the Day of Resurrection, the Day of the Kingdom. Those who walk in circles (see verse 9) are those who confine themselves only to the weekly seven days, and therefore to this world. See the note on Psalm 6:1.

⁜ Cassiodorus comments that the fallen world does not know "the Eighth" day. The Eighth, in fact, refers to our eternal rest in the Kingdom.

⁜ Saint Augustine amplifies this perception as he says that this Eighth Day can be understood to be the Eternal Age. The fallen world's seven-day cycle simply repeats itself. However, after this seven-day cycle (the period of human time) is finished, Eternity will be given to those who are in the Church.

[Σῶσόν με, Κύριε Salvum me fac]

2 Save me, O LORD, for any holy one has come to an end ;/ for truths have been diminished from amongst the sons of Men.

V 2 About this verse : Saint Athanasius exhorts us that, whenever we observe the haughtiness of the multitude, and we see evil spreading everywhere, so that to us, there seems to be no-one left who pleases God, we ought to flee to the Lord for refuge and say Psalm 11.

✠ About "*Save me, O Lord*" : Cassiodorus comments that since King David saw this world oppressing souls in many ways, he asked the Lord to save him. He knew that true healing is found in the Lord. This prayer may be offered likewise by anyone.

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

✠ About "*any holy one ... end*" : Saint John Chrysostom admits that it is a very difficult situation to be left alone as a faithful person, without the support of the like-minded, since, as the Apostle says, we stimulate one another to good deeds (see Hebrews 10:24). To travel alone is much more difficult than to travel with like-minded companions. This is the same in our life in Christ. Nevertheless, we have the example of the Patriarchs, who were in this solitary condition, and who persevered. Abraham and Noah were like sheep amongst wolves, roses amongst thorns, stars in pitch darkness, who walked contrary to the popular flow ("marching to a different drummer", indeed). Therefore, the righteous person takes refuge in the Lord by constantly calling for help. The righteous one does not say, as it were : "Help me, because I am holy". Rather, the righteous says : "Help me, because there is no holy one remaining".

- ✣ Bishop Eusebius of Cæsarea asks rhetorically who could be his deliverer since there are no longer any righteous persons. Because of this, he asks the Lord to be his Saviour.
- ✣ See Psalms 13:3 ; 52:4 ; 115:2 ; Micah 7:2 ; Isaiah 57:1 ; 59:15 ; Jeremiah 5:1 ; Romans 3:10-12.

✠ About "*holy one*": Holiness is an expression of open, pure, loving communion with God. Pre-lapsarian humans had a single (undivided) heart, and pure speech, and there was a profound connexion between the word and its meaning and action. "Yes" was "yes", and "no" was "no" (see Matthew 5:37) ; word was the same as deed. There was complete harmony with God's will. Adam's naming of the animals shows all this.

- ✣ See the note about "*holy one*" on Psalm 4:4.

✠ About "*truths have been diminished*" : Saint John Chrysostom explains that truths are what exist in reality. Falsehoods lack existence. Things have been distorted and obscured because of the mis-behaviour of human beings.

- ✣ Evagrius of Pontus points out that it is obvious that when there are no righteous left, neither is there any truth left. It is possible that it is because of such a dearth of the righteous that so many heresies have had the opportunity to arise.

✠ About "*truths*" : see the note about "*truth*" on Psalm 5:10.

✠ About "*diminished*" : see Psalms 88:46 ; 106:38 ; Habakkuk 3:12 (Matins Canticle 4). These references include another Greek verb which has the same meaning.

✠ About "*sons of men*" : see the note about "*sons of men*" on Psalm 4:3.

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3 Each one spoke futilities to his neighbour :/ deceitful lips spoke bad things in a double heart.

V 3 About "*futilities*" : see the note about "*futility*" on Psalm 4:3.

✠ About "*neighbour*" : see Psalms 14:3, 4 ; 23:4 ; 27:3 ; 30:12 ; 34:14 ; 37:12 ; 43:14 ; 78:3, 12 ; 79:7 ; 87:19 ; 88:42 ; 100:5 ; 121:8. See Luke 10:25-37.

✠ About "*deceitful lips*" : see verse 4 ; see Psalms 16:6 ; 30:19.

✠ About "*deceitful*" : see the note about "*deceitful*" on Psalm 5:7.

✠ About "*double heart*" : Saint John Chrysostom comments on this verse by saying that the evil is not superficial, but deeply ingrained and from the heart, because it is a double heart, a duplicitous heart. This can be much more cruel than a simple enemy who would be open in his strategies and easily detected. Those with a double heart put on a certain public face which is quite different from what is truly the case within, and they are therefore difficult to discover. Thus they are much more harmful than those who conceal their weapons.

✣ Saint John of Kronstadt amplifies the words of Saint John Chrysostom by drawing to our attention how common it is for a person to be two-faced : to have one thing in the heart, but to speak quite another thing with the mouth. This duplicity shows that the fallen heart is a "pillar of falsehood", and that to lie to humans, to oneself and to God is, as it were, the usual reflex of a fallen human being. He reminds us of he words of Psalm 115:2. He cautions us about the importance of allowing the Lord through our prayer to purify our hearts. This comes as the Lord builds truth within the heart, so that we can begin to worship Him "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24) and to speak the truth from the heart (Psalm 14:2). When we are able to speak the truth in prayer, then we will become protected in and by the truth, and we will become those who may be relied upon to speak the truth always.

✣ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus mentions that regard for truth is becoming an endangered species, because everyone distrusts the other. They profess friendship, but in fact they behave as an enemy. Some use their mouths to convey falsehoods into their neighbour's heart, and others do the same in return.

✣ Father P Reardon reflects that traditionally, the purpose of words is for accurate communication based on an inherited perception of the meanings of words. In this context, the meanings of words has been stable, and changes have developed very slowly over time. At the present time, however, the study of words and their meanings has been removed from the realm of philology and transferred to the arena of sociology. In this environment, words have no stable meaning. Rather, the words mean what the speaker wishes them to mean. This situation dissolves the relationship between words and truth. As a result, words easily can be made to mean the opposite of their initial and traditional meaning. He avers that such a situation is not only dangerous for human society, it is catastrophically so. Indeed, speech cannot be determined merely by social conventions. It is clear that from the beginning, Adam, who knew the Lord and the Mind of the Lord, was thus able also to know what were the correct names of animals and plants, even before the appearance of Eve. His words reflected the light and the truth of His knowledge and understanding of creation. There was no rupture between word and deed.

✣ It is ever more difficult to be in harmony with the apostles, and with the exhortation that our "yes" be "yes" and our "no" be "no" (see Matthew 5:37 ; James 5:12).

✣ The dark speaking from a divided heart is another mark of the activity of evil. It is useful keep in mind that the Greek word διάβολος, *diabolos*, meaning "slanderer", "accuser", "calumniator", can

carry the meaning of division. It is implied both in the roots of the parts of the Greek word, and in the usual meanings in translation.

✣ See the note about "*speaking peace ... hearts*" on Psalm 27:3.

✠ About "*heart*" : see the note about "*heart*" on Psalm 4:3.

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4 May the LORD exterminate all deceitful lips/ and a boastful tongue, which say :

V 4 About this verse : Saint John Chrysostom cautions us that this prayer is not against, but for, the double-hearted. Mentioned here is not the destruction of the person, but of the "*deceitful lips*" and of the "*boastful tongue*", which speak so insolently. King David asks that the evil be done away with, and that there be an end to the arrogance, folly and deceit. He thus gives an application of the expression : "hate the sin, but love the sinner".

✠ About "*exterminate*" : this word in Greek and Latin means "utterly destroy", "destroy completely". In the Old Covenant, this was the directive given to several Israelite leaders upon the arrival of those returning from Egypt with Moses (see 2 Moses 23:23 ; Joshua 3:10 ; 6:23 ; 10:27-39 ; 11:11, 12 ; 5 Moses 7:1, 2).

✣ See Psalms 17:41 ; 33:17 ; 36:9, 22, 28, 34, 38 ; 43:3 ; 53:7 ; 72:27 ; 82:5, 11 ; 91:8 ; 100:8 ; 105:23, 34 ; 108:15 ; 142:12 ; 144:20 ; Zephaniah 2:11.

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

✠ About "*boastful*" : see Psalms 34:26 ; 37:17 ; 48:7 ; 54:13 ; 73:4 ; 93:3.

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5 "We shall magnify our tongues ;/ our lips are our own ;/ who is lord of us ?"

V 5 About this verse : Father P Reardon reflects that the present verse clearly describes an extremely dangerous, and defiant situation.

✣ This defiant passage prepares for the present, twenty-first century's acidly foggy fluidity in communication and behaviours. Such words as those of this verse describe the so-called post-modern era, in which words have shifting meaning, or even no meaning. The former, traditional understanding, that word and deed are identical or almost identical, is now lost. The current theory is that each person can decide unilaterally what the words may mean. This present situation (at least in the English language) manifests the consequences of the construction of the Tower of Babel (see Genesis 11:1-9).

✣ See 2 Moses 5:2 ; Job 21:14-15 ; Daniel 3:15.

✠ About "*magnify*" : this word is used generally in the sense of the older usage, that is, meaning "to extol"

or "to praise". The root meaning of the word from Greek through Latin is "to increase", "to make bigger", "to intensify", "to increase the importance of". It is used here in a negative sense.

✣ See Psalms 17:51 ; 19:6, 8 ; 33:4 ; 34:27 ; 39:17 ; 20:10 ; 56:11 ; 68:31 ; 69:5 ; 91:6 ; 103:1, 24 ; 125:2, 3 ; 137:2 ; Luke 1:46 (Canticle 9, Part 1). See also the note about "*magnificence*" on Psalm 8:2.

✠ About "*Who is lord of us* ?" : Saint John Chrysostom comments that this diabolical and insolent question : "*Who is lord of us* ?" is the sign of a corrupt spirit which ignores the fact that one's whole body and being, and all things visible and invisible, are themselves proclaiming God's power, wisdom, provident care and loving-kindness. This insolent question is madness.

✣ See Wisdom of Sirach 5:3.

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6 "Because of the misery of the poor and the groaning of the needy,/ now I will arise", says the LORD ;/ "I will place them in salvation, and in that I will speak openly".

V 6 About this verse : Saint John Chrysostom explains that it is the powerful and rich who had better be in fear of the consequences of their oppressing and wronging the poor and needy. The mere fact of the oppression of the poor, coupled with the might of their appeal to the Lord, calls down Grace, and stirs God to action because of His compassion. The poor have stronger weapons than all the resources of their oppressors. Their difficult lot rouses the Lord to action ; thus, their groaning can produce the overturning of anything. The Lord declares that He will be their champion ; and He will show it openly, so that the opponents may come to their senses.

✠ About "*misery ... needy*" : see Psalms 71:13-14 ; 145:7 ; Amos 2:6 ; 5:12 ; Isaiah 3:15 ; 10:2.

✠ About "*misery*" : see Psalms 31:4 ; 39:3 ; 68:21 ; 87:19 ; 139:11.

✠ About "*the poor*" (plural) : see Psalms 68:33 ; 71:4 ; 139:13. See the note about "*the poor one*" on Psalm 9:19.

✠ About "*groaning*" : see the note about "*groaning*" on Psalm 6:7.

✠ About "*the needy*" : see the note about "*the needy*" on Psalm 9:13.

✠ About "*arise*" : see the note about "*arise*" on Psalm 3:8.

✠ About "*salvation*" : Saint Athanasius reminds us that the Lord says that He will make His "*salvation*" manifest, and heard, for it will be preached all over the earth.

✣ Saint Augustine understands this to mean "salvation in Christ", in accordance with the words of the God-bearer Symeon in Luke 2:30.

✣ See the note about "*salvation*" on Psalm 3:9.

✠ About "*speak openly*" : see Matthew 10:19-20 ; Luke 21:12-15.

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7 The teachings of the LORD are pure teachings :/ silver tested by fire,

proved in the earth, cleansed seven times.

V 7 About this verse : Saint John Chrysostom says that the Lord's pure and unalloyed words cannot but absolutely take effect.

✣ Saint John of Kronstadt explains to us that because pride can invade our prayer, and because our intellect can inflate itself, so that because of linearity the words of our prayer cannot find their place because of carnality and deception. It is necessary that our prayer be thoroughly purified through the burning fire of love for God in our heart, as in a crucible.

✣ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) supplements this by suggesting that this is a metaphor for silver purified in an oven dug into the ground or made within brick walls. However, it refers to the words of the Lord, which come to us in purity, free from any imperfection.

✠ About "*pure*" : see Psalms 18:10 ; 23:4 ; 50:12 ; 74:9 (this word is used in this work to translate three Greek synonyms).

✠ About "*teachings*" : this translates the Greek word λόγια, *logia*.

✣ See Psalms 17:31 ; 18:15 ; 104:19 : 106:11 ; 118:11, 38, 50, 58, 67, 76, 82, 99, 103, 116, 123, 133, 140, 148, 158, 162, 169, 170, 172 ; 147:4.

✠ About "*silver tested by fire*" : Bishop Eusebius of Cæsarea reminds us that the purification and refinement of silver is accomplished by passing it through the fire several or many times until every impurity is removed, and only pure silver remains. Likewise, he tells us, the words of the Lord (which require no such refinement) are pure, undefiled, and full of truth.

✣ See Psalms 65:10 ; 67:31 ; Proverbs 10:21 ; 17:3 ; Wisdom of Solomon 3:6 ; Zechariah 13:9.

✠ About "*tested by fire*" : see the notes about "*tested by fire*" on Psalms 16:3 ; 118:140 ;
see 2 Kingdoms 22:31 ; Psalms 17:31 ; 25:2 ; 65:10 ; 67:31 ; 104:19 ; 118:140 ; Proverbs 10:21 ; 17:3 ;
1 Peter 1:7.

✠ About "*proved in the earth*" : in citing this text, Saint Athanasius uses words that suggest that the earth is used as a crucible. Bells are cast in the earth.

✣ This use of "*prove*" as "test" in this phrase provides a poetic intensification through repetition. The following phrase with "*cleansed*" is a further intensification.

✠ About "*earth*" : the Greek word refers to "soil", "dust" or "mud".

✣ See Psalms 16:11 ; 103:14 ; 112:7 ; 140:7 ; 142:3 ; 145:4.

✠ About "*cleansed*" : see Psalms 18:13, 14 ; 50:4, 9 ; Hebrews 9:14 ; 1 John 1:9.

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8 You, O LORD, You will watch over us,/ and You will preserve us from this generation, and unto the age.

V 8 About this verse : Saint John Chrysostom comments that the Prophet David is constantly taking refuge in the Lord, and asking for help. The Lord's help is always all-powerful, uninterrupted and

effective. The Lord unfailingly guards us from the impious.

✣ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus reminds us that when we are guarded and protected by the Lord's Grace, we can not only escape the wiles of the present generation, but we will also be given eternal salvation.

✣ Cassiodorus observes that in this life, the Lord consoles us ; He helps us ; He preserves us lest we perish. In the life to come, the Lord sets us free from any anxiety ; He blesses us so that we will be free from wretchedness ; He glorifies us and crowns us.

✠ About "*watch over*" : see the note on Psalm 16:8 ; see also 5 Moses 32:10 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 15:1 ; 24:20 ; 33:21 ; 36:28 ; 40:3 ; 85:2 ; 90:11 ; 96:10 ; 114:6 ; 120:3, 4, 5, 7 ; 126:1 ; 144:20 ; 145:9 ; Habakkuk 3:16 (Matins Canticle 4).

✠ About "*preserve*" : the Greek word means to "preserve", "take care of ", "maintain", "keep", "guard".

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

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9 In a circle do the impious walk round about ;/ in accordance with Your exaltedness,/ with much care have You treated the sons of Men.

V 9 About "*in a circle*" : Cassiodorus comments that they walk "*in a circle*" so that they may never reach the right path. Circuitous and winding routes are always connected with evil manners. They cannot come to the Eighth-day Rest, because they are always revolving backwards as moving wheels appear to do.

✣ Saint John of Kronstadt comments that "*the impious*" do not plumb the depths of the meaning of the words of prayer because they simply circle about in the distraction of their own thoughts, and they observe only surface details.

✣ In this case, a circle is the result of the tangle of lies. The impious prowl about in darkness and confusion, as the result of empty words and lies. God takes care of His faithful children, and He leads them on straight paths.

✣ See the note about "*round about*" on Psalm 3:7.

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

✠ About "*exaltedness*" : Saint Athanasius says that "*exaltedness*" (loftiness) may refer either to God's power, and then "*much care*" refers to duration [the word can mean multiplication of time] ; or, "exaltedness" means that He made us in His likeness, as much as possible for man, or, that He finds us worthy of much care. Saint Athanasius adds that after the Resurrection of the Lord, our life has been extended limitlessly. See Philippians 2:9-11.

✣ Saint John Chrysostom explains that the Lord made us like Him insofar as the Lord can be like a human being (see 1 Moses 1:26-27). Therefore, what the Lord is in Heaven, this is what we are to be on earth (see 2 Moses 7:1 ; Psalm 81:6). Although we did not make the world, the Lord directs that we build ourselves into a Temple for Him (see 1 Corinthians 6:19). We who are on earth are also in Heaven, in Christ (see Ephesians 2:6).

✠ About "*with much care have You treated ...*" : Archimandrite Placide (Deseilles) translates this verb as

"You have multiplied Your solicitude".

✣ See Psalm 137:3.

✠ About "*sons of men*" : see the note on verse 2.

O Most-holy Father, have mercy on our fragility,
and make allowance for us to hold Your words in a pure heart ;
that we may be able to avoid the verbose deceit of the foolish. — Roman

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