PSALM 28

✠ This psalm is written in the form of a Psalm of Praise.

⁘ See the note about "psalm of praise" in the introduction to Psalm 8.

✠ This psalm is also identified as a Psalm of Thanksgiving, of personal and national confidence.

⁘ See the note about "psalm of thanksgiving" in the introduction to Psalm 17.

✠ *The Orthodox Study Bible* indicates that this psalm prepares for the Baptism of Christ.

✠ Saint Gregory of Nyssa says that the context of this psalm is Psalm 29.

✠ This psalm is used in various services at the Feast of Theophany. It is used (verse 11) as the Prokeimenon of the Sunday Divine Liturgy in Tone 7. It is used (verses 1, 3) for the Alleluia verses of the Divine Liturgy on the Feast Theophany.

"*Hymn on Baptism*"

"*The Voice of God : the thunder of silence*"

"*God's power and glory in a thunderstorm*"

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1 A psalm by David. Of the going-forth of the tent.

V 1 About the Inscription : in the Masoretic (Hebrew) text, the Inscription is "A Psalm of David".

✠ Saint Athanasius draws to our attention that, beginning with the Inscription, the historical background of this psalm is found in the references to the Tent of Meeting (Tabernacle) and to the priesthood.

✠ According to Saint Augustine and Arnobius the Younger, this psalm points to the completion of the Church, and the completion of the Temple in the ultimate sacrifice of Christ.

✠ About "*the going-forth*" : Archimandrite Placide (Deseille) provides a gloss, by writing that this inscription concerns the Feast of Tabernacles, which commemorates "the going-forth" of the Tabernacle.

⁘ The Feast of Tabernacles commemorates the end of the wilderness wandering (see the notes on Psalms 26:6 ; 117:2 ; see also 5 Moses 16:13-15).

[᾽Ενέγκατε τῷ Κυρίῳ Afferte Domino]

Bring to the LORD, you sons of God ;/ bring to the LORD the offspring of rams./ Bring to the LORD glory and honour ;

V 1 About this verse : Saint Basil the Great reminds us that in order rightly to glorify the Lord, it is necessary that we keep a correct comprehension about the Father, about the Godhead of the Only-begotten Son, about the glory of the Holy Spirit. Further, it is important to be aware that God's Providence is present everywhere, and that if we can perceive His presence in even the most minute creatures, then we are the better able to give glory to Him who shines in the whole of His creation.

✣ Theodoret of Cyrrhus points out that the words of this verse can remind us of the words of the Saviour in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age".

✣ Saint Bede compares the offering of lambs (offspring of rams) with the offering of the fruits of missionary endeavour.

✠ About "*bring to the Lord*" : Saint Athanasius further encourages us to sing Psalm 28 when we wish to approach God in the right way in thankfulness.

✣ About "*bring to the Lord*" : see verse 2 ; see Psalm 95:7, 8.

✠ About "*Lord*" : see verses 2, 3, 5, 7, 8. 9. 10, 11 ; see the note about "*Lord*" on Psalm 1:2.

✠ About "*sons of God*" : Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) explains that this phrase refers to the people of Israel (2 Moses 4:22 ; 5 Moses 14:1), which has a contextual logic. However, the Hebrew allows for a meaning "gods" or "sons of the gods". Nevertheless, both the Hebrew and the Greek of this phrase are generally understood to refer to heavenly beings or angels.

✣ See 5 Moses 32:43 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalm 88:7.

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

✠ About "*offspring of lambs*" : Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) explains that this phrase refers to sacrificial lambs.

✠ About "*bring ... glory*" : Saint Basil the Great explains to us that the person who can bring glory to the Lord is the one who can discuss divine matters in an orderly manner, to hold the correct teaching about God, and who through contemplation can understand each creature with clear and unconfused thoughts, because that person's life is in harmony with his contemplation, and it is in a clean and unconfused state.

✠ About "*glory*" : in this context, "*glory*" may carry a meaning of "adoring praise" "worshipful thanksgiving", "very great praise", "adoration".

✣ See verses 2, 3, 9 ; see the note about "*glory*" on Psalm 3:4.

✠ About "*honour*" : see the note about "*honour*" on Psalm 8:6.

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2 bring to the LORD glory to His Name./ Worship the LORD in His holy court.

V 2 About "*Lord*" : see the note about "*Lord*" on verse 1.

✠ About "*glory to His Name*" : see Psalm 95:8.

✠ About "*glory*" : see the note on verse 1.

✠ About "*name*" : see the note about "*name*" on Psalm 5:12.

✠ About "*worship*" : see the note about "*worship*" on Psalm 5:8.

✠ About "*court*" : Saint Basil the Great points out to us that although many assume the attitude of prayer, they are not "*in His holy court*" because of their wandering thoughts, and being distracted by futile cares. The one who makes a god of money, or glory, or his belly, or anything else does not worship the Lord. Although in the midst of the visible assembly, such persons are not in His holy court.

✣ Saint Augustine likens our heart to "*court*", and he exhorts us worship the Lord in our heart, which has become widened and sanctified, and which is His holy home in us.

✣ "*Court*" refers to an enclosed quadrangular area, often surrounded by buildings, or a large hall with stair-cases and galleries, hence the place or throne-room where a monarch might judge, or the place where a legal court assembles. This sort of quadrangular area, in the time of Homer, and in the times of the LXX translators, often referred to an area in a home or other building, which would be used for religious worship purposes, and which was open to the air. By extension, the courts of the Lord could be the heavenly courts, in His Presence.

✣ See Psalms 64:5 ; 83:3, 11 ; 91:14 ; 95:8, 9 ; 991:4 115:110 ; 121:2 ; 133:1 ; 134:2.

✠ See 1 Chronicles 16:28.

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3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters ;/ the God of glory thundered,/ the LORD, over many waters.

V 3 About "*the voice ... waters*" : Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović) rhetorically asks when we human beings will be as completely obedient to the Lord as are the waters (along with the other elements : earth, air, fire). He brings before our consciousness some of the specific examples given in the Scriptures. He reminds us about the voice of the Lord at the Jordan River when Jesus Christ was baptised (Matthew 3:17) ; about the stilling of the storm at the voice of Christ on the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:39) ; about the changing of water into wine at Cana of Galilee (John 2:7-8) ; about the Lord's voice to Moses at the Red Sea when the seas parted (2 Moses 14:26ff) ; about the voice of the Lord to Moses in the wilderness, after which water flowed from the dry rock (2 Moses 17:5-6). Water is part of God's creation, and when the Lord wills, wonders are accomplished in obedience to His voice.

- ✣ Saint Augustine makes this verse refer also to the voice of Christ over all the nations through His preaching of repentance.

- ✣ See the Tropar of the Feast of Theophany.

✠ About "*voice of the Lord*" : Father P Reardon explains that this phrase appears seven times in this psalm. The Hebrew word for voice, קוֹל, *qol*, better conveys the poetic, onomatopoetic representation of thunder (which is poetically intended in Hebrew) than do those of other languages in translation.

- ✣ See verses 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 ; see Psalm 105:25.

✠ About "*voice*" : see the note about "*voice*" (of God) on Psalm 17:14.

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

✠ About "*waters*" : Saint Basil the Great extends the meaning of "*waters*" to include the example and preaching of the saints, who have received what the Lord said to the Woman of Samaria, "*the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life*". This flows from them as rivers, and refreshes all who receive it.

✠ About "*the God of glory*" : see Acts 7:2.

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

✠ About "*glory*" : see the note on verse 1.

✠ About "*thundered*" : Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus explains that this verse foreshadows the voice of God which was heard at the Baptism of Christ.

- ✣ See the note about "*thundered*" on Psalm 17:14.

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4 The voice of the LORD is in strength ;/ the voice of the LORD is in magnificence ;

V 4 About this verse : the two parts reflect a poetic intensification. Therefore, Saint Basil the Great makes link between "*strength*" and "*magnificence*". Both qualities find their source in the Lord, and they are expressed in those who with humility achieve the good and thus express the voice of the Lord. Thus, they comprehend the goodness of God's Providence and they express it in their own hospitality and generosity. The difficulties or sins of others do not shake or undermine them because they have grown beyond passions. Therefore, they elevate the "*magnificence*" of God, and thus express the voice of the Lord.

✣ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus refers us to the events surrounding Pentecost in Acts 2, which he tells us are prepared for in this verse. He also refers us to the Dominical words in Luke 24:49.

✠ About "*the voice ... strength*" : see Psalms 45:7 ; 67:34 ; Isaiah 30:31.

✠ About "*voice of the Lord*" : see the note on verse 3.

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

✠ About "*strength*" : see the notes about "*strength*" on Psalms 17:2 ; 24:14.

✠ About "*magnificence*" : see the note on Psalm 8:2.

✣ Saint Basil the Great explains that this refers to those who have with vigour and power achieved the good, an extraordinarily great virtue. It refers to a soul not enslaved by the flesh, but instead has enabled its transformation through obedience into its proper, God-given dignity. Such souls glorify God in clarity and love, and they elevate His magnificence.

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5 the voice of the LORD shatters the cedars :/ the LORD will shatter the cedars of Lebanon ;

V 5 About "*voice of the Lord*" : see verse 3.

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

✠ About "*shatters*" : see the note about "*shatter*" on Psalm 2:9.

✠ About "*cedars*" : historically, the cedar tree (and particularly the Cedar of Lebanon) was respected for its beauty, its strength, its durability, its pleasing aroma. It was desired for use in construction of buildings, temples, palaces, coffins. Its leaves are used in medicinal teas, and its sap is used for anointing oil.

✣ Saint Basil the Great reminds us that although this cedar is praised for its many good qualities, it is sometimes critiised as being unfruitful, and unbending. It sometimes is used as an example of impiety because of neglect to attribute its virtues to God. The breaking of the cedars refers to the breaking of pride.

✠ About "*Lebanon*" : see verse 6.

✣ The Lebanon, the Levant, is the principal mountainous area of west Syria, facing the Mediterranean. The name derives from a Semitic word that refers to frankincense bushes. In the French, the root word of "Levant", *lever*, means "to rise", and it suggests the rising of the sun, and the east. Thus, it historically refers to the coastal lands of the eastern Mediterranean, including the islands.

✣ Theodoret of Cyrrus tells us that these words show us that those who worship the Lord will be invincible because they have been freed from the error of idolatry and polytheism.

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6 He will grind them up as that young bull, the Lebanon,/ and the beloved shall be as an offspring of the unicorns.

V 6 About this verse : Saint Augustine interprets the words Christologically as he explains that the voice of the Lord will humble the proud by grinding down the self-exalted and cutting off the pride of those who conspired against Him (Psalm 2:2). He will then conform those who are willing to His own humility. He points out that the dearly beloved, Christ, emptied Himself (Philippians 2:7) and became a child of the Hebrew people. This people had become proud and flaunted their own righteousness as a single horn rather than acknowledging and embracing God's righteousness.

✣ The Masoretic (Hebrew) text is very different from the Greek ("He makes them also to skip like a calf ; Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox"). In this case, "Sirion" refers to "Mount Hermon", which is at the border of Syria and Lebanon.

✠ About "*grind up*" : see the note about "*grind*" on Psalm 17:43.

✣ "*Grind up*" implies making something be small or fine, breaking something into small pieces, or crushing seeds into powder. However, the Greek word may also be translated as "thresh", or "winnow", which implies a similar meaning : to beat soundly ; or to beat as with a flail, to separate seeds from stalks.

✠ About "*the Lebanon*" : see verse 5.

✠ About "*beloved*" : Saint Athanasius explains that "*the beloved*" refers to the choir of the Apostles, who are the sons of the Prophets and Patriarchs.

✠ About "*unicorn*" : Saint Athanasius also opines that "*unicorn*" refers to the holy Prophets and Patriarchs who have only God as their strength.

✣ The "*unicorn*" is a metaphor for a very strong animal. "Rhinoceros" is sometimes suggested as a translation, since it has a single horn, but that usage is uncommon.

✣ See the note about "*unicorn*" on Psalm 21:22.

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7 It is the voice of the LORD cutting through the flame of fire,

V 7 About "*voice of the Lord*" : see the notes about "*voice of the Lord*" and "*voice*" on verse 3.

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

✠ About "*cutting ... fire*" : Saint Augustine interprets this phrase Christologically as he explains that our Saviour passed unharmed through the midst of the fiery anger of those who wanted to kill Him (see Luke 4:30 ; John 7:25-26 ; 8:59 ; 10:31, 39). Likewise, He later cut through the malicious accusations of those who rejected Him [see John 7:12, 41].

✣ Evagrius of Pontus writes that the Lord extinguishes the fiery arrows of evil.

✠ About "*fire*" : Saint Basil the Great explains about this line that "fire" has both burning and illuminating qualities. The Lord distinguishes the qualities of fire regarding the consequences of our life. The fire provides light for the enjoyment of the righteous, and painful burning for those requiring correction. In further considering fire and the Burning Bush, he sees an implied connexion with the Uncreated Light.

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8 the voice of the LORD making the wilderness quake ;/ the LORD will make the wilderness of Kadesh quake.

V 8 About this verse : the repetition of expressions in this psalm about the "*voice of the Lord*" are a poetic intensification, which emphasise the power and effectiveness of the Lord's voice.

✠ About "*the voice ... quake*" : Saint Augustine teaches us that anywhere without the Lord is a spiritual wilderness, and he refers us to Ephesians 2:12. He also says that this Voice stirs to faith peoples who once had no hope, who were bereft of the Lord.

✣ Saint Jerome adds that those wandering in the desert because of faults are moved to repentance to repent and become the habitation of God. Further, he says that those who had been barren became fruitful.

✠ About "*wilderness*" : Saint Basil the Great explains that the *wilderness* is like wild, woody souls, like wild beasts, like various passions, which are cleared out by this Voice, which is "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

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

✠ About "*quake*" : see Psalms 59:4 ; 67:9 ; Habakkuk 3:14 (Matins Canticle 4).

✠ About "*voice of the Lord*" : see the notes on verse 3.

✠ About "*wilderness*" : see the note about "*wilderness*" on Psalm 3:1.

✠ About "*Kadesh*" : the English transliteration of the Greek word is "Kadēs". Kadesh is the modern "Tall an-Nabī Mind". It is an ancient city on the Orontes ("Al-ʿĀī") River in western Syria, and about 24 km (15 mi) southwest of Homs. It was the site of two battles in ancient times. The events of 4 Moses 20:1-24 took place at Kadesh.

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9 The voice of the LORD makes perfect the deer ;/ and it shall uncover the thickets./ In His temple everyone exclaims : "Glory".

V 9 About "*voice of the Lord*" : see the notes on verse 3.

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

✠ About "*makes perfect*" : Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) uses a slightly different meaning for the Greek word which is here translated as "*makes perfect*". He uses "*brings the birth-pangs on hinds*", and he comments that deer often give birth during thunderstorms.

⁜ See the note about "*perfected*" on Psalm 8:3 ; see also Job 39:1-4.

✠ About "*deer*" : Saint Athanasius tells us that the "*deer*" are the saints, and that "*makes perfect*" means to make them ready.

⁜ "*Deer*" translates the Greek word ἔλαφος, *elaphos*, which (as *anthropos* with humans) is here used to refer to the race of deer.

✠ About "*uncover the thickets*" : Saint Basil the Great explains that the thickets (woody souls) where the various wild beasts (sins) are lurking, are cleared out by the Word of God which is sharper than any two-edged sword (see Hebrews 4:12).

✠ About "*in His temple ... glory*" : Saint Basil the Great tells us that every creature of the Lord gives "*glory*" to the Lord, and that there is nowhere that is more appropriate to do so than in "*His temple*". Only giving glory to God should be heard in His temple, rather than the meaningless and empty chatter that so often characterises human behaviour in the place of worship. By keeping mundane conversations out of our worship, by God's help we behave as we were created to behave, rather than behaving in a manner lower than other creatures.

✠ About "*temple*" : see the note about "*temple*" on Psalm 5:8.

✠ About "*glory*" : Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) says that although storms rage on the earth, the Heavens sing the glory of God ; and that the storm of judgement clears the way for the Messianic age of peace.

✣ See the notes on verse 1.

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10 The LORD will settle in the deluge ;/ the LORD will sit as king unto the ages.

V 10 About "*Lord*" : see the note about "*Lord*" on verse 1.

✠ About "*deluge*" : Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) explains that this refers to the Flood and to some other floods, which are a manifestation of divine justice.

✣ This word translates the Greek word κατακλυσμός, *cataclysmos*, which means a very great flood, and from that it took the meaning of a great upheaval.

✣ Arnobius the Younger suggests that the Lord, in this deluge, in this flood, washes away our faults.

✣ Theodoret of Cyrrhus adds that the Lord restores the world, flooded with iniquity, washes it, and makes it a new creation, and he cites the Apostle Paul, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

✣ See 1 Moses 6:17 ; 1 Peter 3:20.

✠ About "*the Lord will sit as king*" : Saint Basil the Great explains that God sits in a soul that is aglow from its washing, as though He were making it His throne.

✠ About "*king*" : see the note about "*king*" on Psalm 2:6.

✠ About "*unto the ages*" : see the note about "*unto the ages*" on Psalm 5:12.

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11 The LORD will give strength to His people ;/ the LORD will bless His people in peace.

V 11 About "*the Lord ... people*" : see Psalm 67:36.

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

✠ About "*strength*" : see the note about "*strength*" on Psalms 17:2, 3 ; 24:14.

✠ About "*His people*" : this phrase refers to the people of God, which means the people of Abraham, the people of Isaac, the people of Israel, the people of Jacob, the people of the Covenant, the Chosen People. This is clearly stated in Daniel 3:35.

✣ See the note about "*His people*" on Psalm 13:7.

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

✠ About "*will bless*" : see the note about "*bless*" on Psalm 5:13.

✠ About "*peace*" : Father P Reardon comments that after this psalm has addressed the strength of storms, this verse brings us to the peace which comes afterwards. Now there is serenity, and the Lord God upon His throne governs and guides His Church.

✣ See the note about "*peace*" on Psalm 4:9.

O Lord, give strength to Your people,

and make us the temple of the Holy Spirit ;

that, from a pure heart,

we may prepare for You

a pleasing whole-burnt offering. — Roman

[See Psalm 50:12, 18, 21]
