

## DEVOTION FOR THE FIFTH SATURDAY AFTER PENTECOST

### PSALM 137:1-6

**By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.**

On the willows there we hung up our lyres. For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!'

**How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?**

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth.

**If I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy!**

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen*

Old Testament Reading: Deuteronomy 16:1-22 Festivals and Worship

New Testament Reading: Acts 28:1-44 *Paul arrives in Rome*

### **“BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON”**

The people of Israel sang Psalm 137 during their exile in Babylon, almost six centuries before the birth of Christ. Nothing is left of Babylon, but ruins in the desert of Iraq. Saddam Hussein reportedly wanted to rebuild it as a theme park, but nothing came of it and now he's gone too. The Babylonians had captured Jerusalem and deported thousands of people to work on their irrigation projects in the desert. It was hot, hard work! The prophets told the people of Israel they had brought these things upon themselves, because they had abandoned their faith in God. Sometimes we bring bad things upon ourselves too!

Jerusalem is more than one thousand kilometres from Babylon. The Jews of Jerusalem and Judea travelled that entire distance by foot. That's a long way to walk! They remembered how when they camped at night, the Babylonian soldiers would get a little drunk and make fun of them, by asking them to sing some of their songs of faith. I'm sure all of us have been teased, mocked and insulted. It's hurts when people treat us cruelly. It hurts whenever we remember. That's one of the reasons this ancient song is still read and sung today. It speaks to feelings we all share and to things we have all experienced. Talking about bad experiences helps heal wounds. That's why we sing sad songs and share our feelings with others in letters and conversations.

Despite the pain of being forced to walk so many miles and being mocked and laughed at whenever they stopped on the way, something good came out of the Jewish captivity in Babylon. God drew them closer to His heart, as they realized how much they needed Him. God drew them closer to each other, as they realized how much they needed one another. God even drew the Babylonians closer to Himself, as the Babylonians learned about His words and ways through the Jewish exiles.

So many good things happened to the Jews in Babylonia that when another king allowed them to go home seventy years later, many decided to stay. Some of their descendants remain there to this day. Centuries later those Jewish communities, scattered throughout what became the Roman Empire, became the seedbeds for the growth and spread of the gospel of Jesus, throughout the whole wide world.

Even in our tears and sorrows God works good things. God always finds ways of bringing good things to our lives and to the life of the world. As St. Paul would later write: *“In all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”* And as the Lord said to Isaiah, *“The word that goes forth from my mouth will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I send it.”*

**“GOD MOVES IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY” (Public Domain)**

**God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.**

**Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence, faith sees a smiling face.**

**His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.**

**Blind unbelief is sure to err and scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter, And He will make it plain.**

**You fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds you so much dread,  
Are big with mercy and will break in blessings on your head.**

**PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, in and through all things, you accomplish your good in the world; assure us you will accomplish your good in our lives. Our thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not our ways. We think according to the earth. Your thoughts are above the highest heavens. We act in time, but you act throughout eternity. Bless us to put our confidence in your love that in all things we may believe you are at work, your will be accomplished and that even if we don't understand your ways that your will is good. In Jesus' Name. Amen

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father who art in heaven.**

**Hallowed be Thy name.**

**Thy Kingdom come.**

**Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread**

**And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,**

**Forever and ever. Amen**

**THE CREED**

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen**

**BENEDICTION**

**Isaiah 55:12**

***“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”***