**Psalm 122**

*1. I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'*

*2. And now our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.*

*3. Jerusalem, built as a city that is at unity in itself.*

*4. Thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as is decreed for Israel,*

*to give thanks to the name of the Lord.*

*5. For there are set the thrones of judgement,*

*the thrones of the house of David.*

*6. O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May they prosper who love you.*

*7. 'Peace be within your walls and tranquillity within your palaces.'*

*8. For my kindred and companions' sake,*

*I will pray that peace be with you.*

*9. For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,*

*I will seek to do you good.*

**Refrain**

I was glad when they said,

**'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'**

Psalm 122 is a pilgrim psalm, which probably dates from a time after the exile in Babylon.

Verses 1 and 2 show a pilgrim leaving Jerusalem, expressing the pleasure, which his visit has brought him. He had been invited to join a group of travellers, who had come together for the dangerous journey. (v.1, ‘I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.”’) The idea of an arduous and dangerous journey can be found also in Psalms 23 and 121.

In vv.3-5, the psalmist gives his impression of the city. (v.3, ‘Jerusalem, built as a city that is at unity in itself.’) He notes also the imposing structure of the walls and their defence towers. He sees the procession of pilgrims from all the tribes of Israel. (v.4, ‘Thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as is decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.’)

The psalmist has also seen the site where the thrones of the kings of David stood in former times. (v.5, ‘For there are set the thrones of judgement, the thrones of the house of David.’) The throne was one of judgement.

The law required every male Israelite to present himself at the sanctuary three times a year. (v.4. ‘Thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as is decreed for Israel, to give thanks for the name of the Lord.’) This can be seen also in Exodus,

‘Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.’ (23,17)

The main function of the king was to bring the justice of God to the nation, as can be seen in Psalm 72, ‘Give the king your judgements, O God, and your righteousness to the son of a king. Then shall he judge your people righteously and your poor with justice.’ (vv.1,2)

The final section is a prayer for the well-being of the city, both material and spiritual, and the well-being of those, who love Jerusalem. The psalmist values Jerusalem, not because it is the nation’s capital, but because God’s temple, God’s house, is there.

The Middle East has been, for a very long time, a centre of conflict, hatred and division. Jerusalem, loved and aspired to by many people, is a divided city. What happens in that area affects all of us, as we have seen during our own lifetimes. So, like the psalmist, we have to pray, as in vv. 6,7, ‘O pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

“May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls and tranquillity within your palaces.”’

We, too, have our special places, our parish churches and cathedrals, places, which inspire us and where many of us are aware of the presence of God. We organise processions on special occasions, which help us to rejoice, to thank God for our faith and to find inspiration. Processions are organised, too, on special occasions in our country, for example, at the coronation of the sovereign, as some of us experienced in 1953, in the early days of television, when our Queen was crowned. We see processions organised for the State Opening of Parliament and on other state occasions, too. We become aware of the history of our country, what it means to us and how we want it to be in the future. So, we, too, pray for peace in times of war and at other times also, remembering the lessons of the past and trying as best we can to build a better world. Perhaps Psalm 122 can inspire us to value what we have, to seek to develop our faith and to plan for the world of our children and grandchildren, and, like those pilgrims, to come together to work for justice and peace in our country and throughout the world.

**Prayer**

Father in heaven,

whose Church on earth is a sign of your heavenly peace,

an image of the new and eternal Jerusalem:

grant to us in the days of our pilgrimage

that, fed with the living bread of heaven,

and united in the body of your Son,

we may be the temple of your presence,

the place of your glory on earth,

and a sign of your peace in the world;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

(Post Communion Collect, Dedication Festival)