



# PRAYING AT HOME

## FROM ASCENSION TO PENTECOST

The Ascension of the Lord marks a new moment in the life of the community of Christ's followers. Jesus returns to the Father in order to send upon them the gift of the Holy Spirit, and so from earliest days, Christians have used the days following Ascension Day to wait in prayer for the renewing, reviving gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This time of expectant waiting echoes the experience of the Apostles who gathered with the Blessed Virgin Mary in prayer before the Spirit came upon them.

This period of prayer is often referred to as a 'novena', which is an ancient practice of the Church to spend a series of consecutive days or weeks in prayer for a particular theme or intention. In praying this novena, we are uniting ourselves with the ancient tradition of the Church.

In the past few years this period has been given a particular focus through the 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative; a global ecumenical movement that invites us to pray for strength in conviction as we live out our faith in our daily lives and as we strive to draw others into a lively relationship with God in Christ in the fellowship of his Church.

The circumstances of covid-19 mean that we are unable to gather in our churches this year, but we provide these resources to encourage you to pray and act as part of 'Thy Kingdom Come' in your homes, asking ever more earnestly in these times for the Holy Spirit to come to renew the face of the earth.

In this booklet you will find a devotion for each day of the novena, based on the Prayer Intentions that have been identified by the organisers of 'Thy Kingdom Come' and which are shaping peoples prayers globally.

- An introduction to use before each devotion is on page 3
- The daily material begins on page 4
- A conclusion for the devotion is on page 15

You might like to use these devotions at a set time of the day, perhaps alongside your regular pattern of prayer. It might be that during this period of prayer you might like to set aside times of prayer throughout the day to spend time with God. You can find some prayers to use at different times of the day in the Praying at Home booklet, available on [www.churchunion.co.uk/coronavirus](http://www.churchunion.co.uk/coronavirus), along with other resources for use at this time.

During Thy Kingdom Come we are encouraged to pray for five friends or family members in particular during the novena, that they might come to faith in Jesus.

*"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses ...to the ends of the earth. When he had said this...he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight...Then they returned to Jerusalem ... and were constantly devoting themselves to prayer... When the day of Pentecost had come they were all together in one place... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit... and that day about three thousand persons were added." The Acts of the Apostles 1, 2*

# PREPARATION

*Begin your time of prayer for the Novena with this preparation*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people  
*and kindle in us the fire of your love.*  
All who are led by the Spirit of God  
are children of God and fellow-heirs with Christ.  
*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people.*  
Renew the face of your creation, Lord,  
pouring on us the gifts of your Spirit,  
*and kindle in us the fire of your love.*  
For the creation waits with eager longing  
for the glorious liberty of the children of God.  
*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people*  
*and kindle in us the fire of your love.*

*cf Romans 8*  
*from Common Worship: Daily Prayer*

My God, even before we seek you, you are with us.  
Before we know your name, you are already our God.  
Open our hearts to the mystery that you loved us first,  
and that we can come close to you.  
Thank you for my family and friends and all whom you have given  
to me. I offer this time of prayer for them, and especially for

- 1.) .....
- 2.) .....
- 3.) .....
- 4.) .....
- 5.) .....

That they may come to know the Good News of your love for them,  
shown to us in Jesus and grow in faith in your family, the Church.  
May the light of your Holy Spirit lead me, together with them,  
into the fullness of that Kingdom where you live and reign eternally.  
Amen.

## *The call to share our faith*

### Scripture Reading

*Acts 1*

So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

### Meditation

Heaven opens to you, Lord Jesus Christ, as you return to the Father,  
your triumph gained, your victory won.  
Our humanity there ascends with you,  
and as the cloud veils you from our sight  
we ourselves become your cloud of witnesses  
and nothing can part us from your presence.  
So fill us with your Holy Spirit  
that through us the fragrance of the gospel may spread to all nations.  
Use us to speak the truth about you,  
give us confidence and courage to be your people in name and in deed,  
that in our lives and by our prayers your kingdom may come.

*Pray that God will guide you to find ways of sharing your faith in the testing circumstances of the present.*

FRIDAY

22 May 2020

*To know God better*

## **Gospel Reading**

*John 16. 22-23*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.'

## **Father, grant us wisdom**

Gracious and holy Father, give us wisdom to perceive you, intelligence to understand you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you, a heart to meditate on you, and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*St Benedict of Nursia*

## **Seeing things as they really are**

O my God,  
I want to be able to understand you well.  
I beseech you, answer me  
when I humbly ask you:  
What is truth?  
Grant that I may see things as they are,  
that I may not allow myself  
to be blinded by anything. Amen.

*St Therese of Lisieux*

*Pray for those who have lost sight of God in their lives, or who feel he is far from them at this time, that they might rediscover the depth of his love.*

**Gospel Reading**

*John 16. 23-27*

Jesus said to his disciples: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.’

**Meditation**

Grant me, O Lord God, the grace to trust in you alone;  
to set my roots deep into you,  
so that I may not be overwhelmed  
by the challenges of this present moment  
or become over-anxious about what my future may hold.  
You have taught me that in quietness and trust shall I find my strength.  
So grant that quietly I may trust, quietly obey and quietly love;  
that my life may bear witness to you,  
and so draw others to the warmth of your life-giving Spirit.

*Pray for those feeling isolated and alone, especially as a result of the present physical distancing restrictions, that they will draw strength from trust in God.*

*Forgiveness***Gospel Reading***1 Peter 4. 13-16*

Rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

**Reflection**

The person who asks forgiveness is a person who has renounced the privilege of being right or safe; he has acknowledged that he is hungry for healing, for the bread of acceptance and restoration to relationship. But equally the person who forgives has renounced the safety of being locked into the position of the offended victim; he has decided to take the risk of creating afresh a relationship known to be dangerous, known to be capable of causing hurt. Both the giver and the receiver of forgiveness have moved out of the safety zone; they have begun to ask how to receive their humanity as a gift.

*Rowan Williams, speaking in Stuttgart, 2010*

*Pray for the grace of recognizing those who have wronged you as made in God's image, and for the capacity to respond with mercy.*



MONDAY

*Openness to God*

25 May 2020

*Saint Bede the Venerable*

**Reading**

*Acts 19: 1-7*

And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. There were about twelve men in all.

**Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit**

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.  
Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work too, may be holy.  
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I may love but what is holy.  
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.  
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy. Amen.

*St Augustine of Hippo*

**For the light of faith**

Grant us your light, O Lord,  
so that the darkness of our hearts may wholly pass away,  
and we may come at last to the light of Christ.  
For Christ is that morning star,  
who when the night of this world has passed,  
brings to his saints the promised light of life,  
and opens to them everlasting day. Amen.

*From St Bede, On the Apocalypse*

*Pray that your heart might be open to the renewing power of the Holy Spirit*

TUESDAY  
*Curiosity*

26 May 2020  
*Saint Philip Neri*

**Reading**

*John 17: 6-10*

“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.”

**Cut through my bonds**

My Jesus, I want to serve you, and cannot find the way.  
I want to do good, and I cannot find the way.  
I want to find you, and I cannot find the way.  
I want to love you, and I cannot find the way.  
I do not yet know you, my Jesus, because I do not seek you.  
I seek you, and I cannot find you.  
Come to me, my Jesus.  
I will never love you, if you do not help me, my Jesus.  
Cut through my bonds, if you wish to have me.  
Jesus, be Jesus to me. Amen.

*St Philip Neri*

*Pray for those who have begun to show an interest in things of faith other the last few weeks, that their curiosity will grow into a living encounter with Christ in his Church.*

WEDNESDAY

27 May 2020

*Seeking God*

*Saint Augustine of Canterbury, Bishop*

**Reading**

*John 17: 12-13*

“While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”

**Reading**

As soon as Augustine and his companions entered the dwelling-place assigned to them, they began to imitate the Apostolic manner of life in the primitive Church; applying themselves to constant prayer, watchings, and fastings; preaching the Word of life to as many as they could... In brief, some believed and were baptized, admiring the simplicity of their blameless life, and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine...

When the king, among the rest, believed and was baptized, attracted by the pure life of these holy men and their gracious promises, the truth of which they established by many miracles, greater numbers began daily to flock together to hear the Word, and, forsaking their heathen rites, to have fellowship, through faith, in the unity of Christ's Holy Church. It is told that the king, while he rejoiced at their conversion and their faith, yet compelled none to embrace Christianity, but only showed more affection to the believers, as to his fellow citizens in the kingdom of Heaven. For he had learned from those who had instructed him and guided him to salvation, that the service of Christ ought to be voluntary, not by compulsion. Nor was it long before he gave his teachers a settled residence suited to their degree in his metropolis of Canterbury, with such possessions of divers sorts as were necessary for them.

*The Venerable Bede, A History of the English Church and People*

*Pray for the Church in this land, that we may be a faithful witness to all seeking God.*

*Encounter***Reading***John 17: 24-26*

“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

**Meditation**

Late have I loved you, O beauty so ancient and so new,  
late have I loved you.

You were within me, but I was outside,  
and it was there that I searched for you.

In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created.

You were with me, but I was not with you.

Mere things kept me far away from you;

yet if they had not been in you they would have not been at all.

You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness.

You were radiant, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness.

You breathed your fragrance on me;

I drew in breath and now I pant for you.

I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more.

You touched me, and now I burn for your peace.

*St Augustine of Hippo (d. 430)*

*Pray that, even in testing circumstances, many may come to know the unfailing presence of God with them.*

**Reading**

*John 21: 17-19*

Jesus said to Peter, “Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”

**Reflection**

It is usually assumed in our consumer world that the more choices one has, the freer one is. If one can choose between ten sorts of beer then one is freer than if one had just two brands. But when one has grown into that deeper freedom which is spontaneity, it may become the other way around. There are just a few deep and fundamental choices to make and these are concerned with becoming free and happy in God. There is one single long-term goal, which shapes one’s life and gives it coherence. So one has to opt for certain choices because they are simply part of being oneself.

*Timothy Radcliffe OP, What is the Point of Being a Christian, London, 2005, p45*

*Pray that we may witness to the freedom that Christ brings when we follow him.*

*Faith***Reading***John 21: 24-25*

This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

**Prayer for growth in faith and the knowledge of God**

My Lord and my God, the joy and hope of my heart

I cannot know you fully in this life,

but let me grow here in your knowledge and love

so that in the world to come

I may have the fullness of love and knowledge.

Let me live here in joyful hope, so that I may come one day

to the fulfilment of all hope and joy.

Lord, you have promised that whatever we ask through your Son  
we shall receive, so that our joy may be complete.

Trusting in the truth of your word, I ask for what you have promised.

Let me grow in knowledge of your truth,

let my mind dwell on it, my heart love it,

my mouth speak it, my soul hunger for it,

my flesh thirst for it, my whole being long for it,

till I enter at last into the joy of my Lord,

one God in three persons, blessed forever. Amen.

*St Anselm, from the Proslogion*

*Pray for those who want to grow in faith, that we may all be filled by the hope of what is to come.*

**Reading***Acts 2. 1-4*

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

In the beginning, at creation, you hovered over the water.

*Come Holy Spirit, renew the face of the earth.*

You breathed into Adam a breath of life.

*Come Holy Spirit, Breath of God, breathe in us today.*

You anointed the prophets and kings.

*Come Holy Spirit, anoint us for your service.*

*Send us anew to bring good news to the poor.*

To Elijah you came with the sound of a gentle breeze,  
to the Apostles with signs of wind and flame.

*Come Holy Spirit, in your gentleness and might.*

You are the living water, the river of life that brings fruitfulness and joy.

*Come Holy Spirit, flow freely in your Church.*

You overshadowed Mary at the Annunciation.

*Come Holy Spirit, overshadow us today with your power,  
that the will of God may be accomplished in us and through us.*

You appeared as a dove at the baptism of Jesus Christ.

*Come Holy Spirit, fill the world anew with the gift of your peace.*

You came at Pentecost fulfilling the promise of the Father. You filled the disciples of Jesus who had gathered in prayer and sent them out to preach the good news to every nation. *Come Holy Spirit, lead us anew to Jesus Christ. May we be baptised with Holy Spirit and fire.*

You are the love of God poured into our hearts.

*Come Holy Spirit, make us one. Fill us and empower us with your presence that we may live in love as sons and daughters of God.*

## CONCLUSION

*Conclude your time of prayer for the Novena with the following*

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,  
And lighten with celestial fire;  
Thou the anointing Spirit art,  
Who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart:

Thy blessed unction from above  
Is comfort, life, and fire of love;  
Enable with perpetual light  
The dullness of our blinded sight:

Anoint and cheer our soiled face  
With the abundance of thy grace:  
Keep far our foes, give peace at home;  
Where thou art guide no ill can come.

Teach us to know the Father, Son,  
And thee, of Both, to be but One;  
That through the ages all along  
This may be our endless song,

Praise to thy eternal merit,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

May the grace of the Holy Spirit enlighten our hearts and minds.  
Alleluia. Amen.