

Their steadfast loyalty to Jesus and their lives of service and sacrifice. Soothe our worries that we may grow in grace and flourish as flowers of the field, our lives reflecting God's motherly and gentle ways. Through Jesus, the son of Mary, **Amen.**

We meet your word in moments of calm and contemplation.

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We express thanks for the care of women in our lives, past and present.

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We offer ourselves as havens of calm for others in turmoil.

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We bear before you women trapped in war zones.

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We wait upon the work of your Spirit as we say the Lord's Prayer together:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in
heaven. Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
Now and for ever. Amen.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with stillness in our lives to enable
prayer.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with silence in our lives to hear
your call.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with space in our lives where inner
beauty may flourish.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with yourself.**



CHANGING LIVES



CHANGED LIVES



NINE DAYS OF PRAYER 2022

DAILY WAITING

Jesus ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4).

(This service is for use by individuals or groups and can be adapted to suit your context. Hymns, worship songs and additional prayers may be added as you wish. *Italic text is intended as an instruction, plain text is to be read by a leader, bold text is to be read together.*)

GATHERING

As you begin your time of prayer, take a moment of silence to remember and delight in the promise of the Holy Spirit Jesus gives to all his disciples.

Read the following from John 14 together:

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth... On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

Make a sign of being present to God and one another – light a candle, open a Bible, share the peace...

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people

And kindle in us the fire of your love.

Come, Holy Spirit, be with us as we pray

And leave us not as orphans.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew us in body, mind and spirit

And send us out to be your presence in your world.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people

And kindle in us the fire of your love.

Optional hymn or worship song.

DAY: 6

LISTENING

Rather, it [your beauty] should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. (1 PETER 3:4, NIV)

REFLECTING

Whilst we are implored from our early years not to judge a book by its cover, it is something we have a hard time adhering to. But scripture is unequivocal: 'Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment' [John 7:24]. It's hardly surprising – most of the people who saw Christ upon the cross merely recognised a criminal, a man suffering a shameful and humiliating death. All most people saw was a failed messiah – unable to see the incredible truth – God triumphing over evil for our sakes. Things are not always what they seem.

But appearance is important for us. There is so much in how we present ourselves. So many of us feel we have to pretend, to fit in, to look a certain way in order to be accepted. Our perceptions of beauty are based on scarcity; they are temporal and limited; they are a cause for comparison and jealousy, insecurity and lack. But this is not how God values us, and it's not how He wants us to value ourselves.

By contrast, the qualities of what St Peter calls, 'the inner spirit' are abundant and unlimited. They leave us feeling joyful, rather than jealous, inspired rather than insecure. Cultivating external beauty is an attempt to feel good about ourselves. Building internal beauty makes others feel good too.

The women Peter is addressing have little social status. They were often objectified, often seen as something to be 'owned' rather than as individual humans seen and loved by God. Yet Peter recognises that they have a rich inner life – one that is subversive to the expectations of the time – a life lived not for others but for Jesus. Peter affirms that neither men nor masters are the supreme authority, but the God who makes us in His own image.

Christ Jesus – the one in whom God is made – calls us to see people for who they really are. It's a call to really and truly hear and know people properly, to work with God's Spirit who encounters us and opens us up

in our deepest places. All too often we tell people about Jesus without trying to hear their story first. All too often we judge before we know the truth. Today we reflect on the true beauty we will surely encounter if we put our trust in God's abundant love, rather than our own fear of not being enough. Only God can enable this.

Let us pray for our five friends, that God would connect with them by His Spirit to their spirit. The only thing that brings people to God is the person of Jesus and the work of the Spirit. He doesn't need anything else from us, He simply asks our love in return.

PRAYER OF ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

- 1 Jesus, like a mother you gather your people to you;
you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.
- 2 Often you weep over our sins and our pride,
tenderly you draw us from hatred and judgement.
- 3 You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds,
in sickness you nurse us, and with pure milk you feed us.
- 4 Jesus, by your dying we are born to new life;
by your anguish and labour we come forth in joy.
- 5 Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness;
through your gentleness we find comfort in fear.
- 6 Your warmth gives life to the dead,
your touch makes sinners righteous.
- 7 Lord Jesus, in your mercy heal us;
in your love and tenderness remake us.
- 8 In your compassion bring grace and forgiveness,
for the beauty of heaven may your love prepare us.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son,
And to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning, is now
And shall be for ever. Amen.**

PRAYING

Tender God,
We give thanks for the example of women in the gospels,