

## PRAYING

Creator God, you gave us a world rich in diversity, Forgive us when we have despised differentness, When we have sought comfort in uniformity. Open our eyes to see our unconscious bias; Soften our hearts to lament our prejudice; Fling wide the shutters of our minds, That we might see beauty in all that you have made. **Amen.**

We meet your word in the challenge of otherness. *(Pause)*  
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We give thanks for the privilege of extending hospitality to refugees and asylum seekers. *(Pause)*  
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We offer ourselves as peacemakers and bridge-builders. *(Pause)*  
Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We bear before you all who experience discrimination because of their gender, race, orientation, disability or background. *(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 opportunities to encounter other cultures.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with hearts that offer warm welcome instead of tepid tolerance.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with the longing to be defined by love.**

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



## 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. The reflection is taken from the Thy Kingdom Come 2023 Novena booklet by the Very Reverend Bob Keys.)

## 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

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us. (1 John 4:11-12 NIV)

### REFLECTING

The disciples were not a naturally cohesive group of people. Left to themselves they were unlikely to have chosen to set up business together or even share a holiday. Matthew was a tax collector working for the occupying Roman authorities. Simon the Zealot belonged to a group that opposed paying taxes to Caesar, some of whose members had been involved in a revolt. James and John, partners in a family fishing business on Lake Galilee, were known as 'sons of thunder', probably because of their fiery tempers and desire for power. This same John who refers to himself as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' in the Gospel that bears his name becomes the 'apostle of love' in this Letter. His life has been utterly transformed, his character turned inside out by his relationship with the Lord Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

We see divisions all around us: gender, race, language, education, upbringing, nationality. Things that in themselves could contribute to the diversity of God's creation become grounds for misunderstanding, strife, enmity, and even violence. Our Heavenly Father, like a master artist, has a palette of rich and varied colours which are designed to paint a beautiful picture of His creation but which, in our sinfulness and selfishness, pride and fear, we fashion into an unholy mess. In this mess, so often, the poor pay the greatest price of our inability to be God's reliable gardeners in His world.

John calls us, in today's verse, to be defined by the love of God: not by anything else. St Paul puts it very plainly in Galatians 3:28: 'There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'

Pray that your five may find their identity in who they are in Christ.

Living the kingdom must mean building churches and communities where 'Love one another' doesn't mean merely liking people who are

like us. We are called to something much more radical, much more attractive. We are designed to be a community of servants: serving and being served by each other across all the manmade barriers that so often divide and discriminate.

### REVELATION 7:9-17 (NRSV)

- 9 After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.
- 10 **They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!'**
- 11 And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God,
- 12 **singing, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.'**
- 13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?'
- 14 **I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows.' Then he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'**
- 15 For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.
- 16 **They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat;**
- 17 **for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'**

**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.**