

PRAYING

God, ever faithful and always just, Teach us to hear the music of your voice: The notes of correction amid the chords of affirmation, The discordant cry for justice amid the tender harmonies of love. And hearing, might we respond, Owing our own weaknesses in the midst of our belovedness, And working to put right the injustices we see. **Amen.**

We meet your word in humility and openheartedness.

(Pause)

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

We give thanks for prophetic voices who alert us to injustice.

(Pause)

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

We offer our attentiveness and obedience to your voice.

(Pause)

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

We bear before you those for whom we, your church, have failed to speak out.

(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 true humility.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with unflinching determination to end injustice.**

Come Holy Spirit: **Gift us with the joy of partnering with you in your mission.**

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: 7

LISTENING

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

(1 John 1:8-9, NIV)

REFLECTING

Psychologists, authors, celebrities, and saints all encounter guilt and deal with it in different ways. Some people see guilt as something we learned in childhood. Others think it is a positive thing that stops mankind from doing worse things than we actually do. Yet others think of it as a negative emotion that stops us realising our full potential, even if our success is at the cost of derailing the lives of those around us.

St John is wonderfully simple, straightforward, realistic, and practical. He invites us to look in the mirror and admit the truth. We're not perfect, none of us is; and if we think 'sinner' is just a term that applies to other people, then we are simply wrong! Even in prisons there is often a grading of offenders so that non-violent criminals see themselves as better than violent ones. Violent criminals can think, 'Well, at least I didn't kill anyone.' Inside or outside prison, it is so easy to make ourselves feel better by finding someone else on whom we can look down.

For St John there is a great sense of release in a correct diagnosis. Reading today's verses is like going to the doctor and being told that there is bad news and good news. The bad news is that there is something seriously wrong. The good news is that there is a never-failing cure. St Augustine said, 'Repentant tears wash out the stain of guilt.' We claim the peace, forgiveness and atonement of the Cross and the restoration and resurrection of Easter morning when we confess our sins and believe into Christ.

That's what we are praying for as we think of our five people today. Pray that the Holy Spirit will open their eyes not to negative guilt that leads to despair but to the hope and joy of forgiveness in Jesus.

Living the Kingdom, as those who know themselves as freely loved and forgiven by God, leaves no room for feelings of imagined superiority like those in the prison. There is nobody for whom Christ had to die more than He had to die for me. So, in the power of the Holy Spirit:

- humility replaces pride,
- responsibilities replace rights and
- service takes the place of selfishness.

PSALM 32 (NRSV)

- 1 Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
- 2 Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- 3 While I kept silence, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
- 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.
- 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord', and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
- 6 Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.
- 7 You are a hiding-place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.
- 8 I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
- 9 Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.
- 10 Many are the torments of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.
- 11 Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

**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.**