

PRAYING

Silence is kept for several minutes, to allow people to pray for the 5 people they have chosen to pray for throughout the Novena. It may be appropriate to invite people to speak those names aloud if they wish to.

Gracious God, in your mercy, search our hearts:
Help us to notice where our worship has become stale habit,
Where our fellowship has become false. Rekindle in us the fire of your love, that we may blaze with life in a world which is weary of empty religion. And challenge loveless systems which perpetuate injustice. Renew your image in us, your Church, that the world may learn the ways of love. Amen.

(Prayer written by Lyndall Bywater, Changing Lives Prayer Network Co-ordinator)

We meet your word with penitent hearts, welcoming your refining in our lives.

(Pause) Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We give you thanks for saints across the ages whose lives have shone with your love.

(Pause) Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We offer to you our prayers for those working in the caring professions, putting love into action.

(Pause) Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

We bear before you all those wounded by the unloving behaviour of those in authority.

(Pause) Come Holy Spirit: **Thy Kingdom Come.**

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

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with deeper knowledge of your unfailing love.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with energy to put love into action.**

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

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 2024 Novena booklet by Bishop Anthony Poggo, Secretary General of the Anglican Communion).

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.

LISTENING

"I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."(Revelation 2:4-5, NRSV)

REFLECTING

The Lord's letter to the church at Ephesus might have been the most painful one for John to write. This was his church. He is writing home, and although Jesus praises the Church's doctrinal purity and capacity for the hard work of sharing the Good News, there is one devastating challenge. Unless the church rediscovers true Christian love both for the Lord and for one another, their very existence is threatened. The love of years ago is no use for today. If love for God has been replaced by mere habit, and if love for fellow church members has given way to bureaucracy and endless committee meetings, then the fire has gone out. The danger is that we become an empty shell with no inner reality. The African Study Bible puts it like this: 'No one likes to eat stale food or read twenty-year old newspapers. We want fresh food and current news. Let us not give to God a love that is stale and cold. Let us repent of any pretending in church.' It is no wonder then that John's letters are full of encouragements to love each other in the Christian community. The tradition, that in extreme old age John would still urge believers, 'Little children love one another', makes all the sense in the world in the light of today's verse. Jesus has challenged, as well as encouraged, the church. When the Bible gives us a challenge: something to change, something to work at, something in us that is not as it should be, it is easy to feel, 'I'm hopeless, I don't have the strength to do anything about that. I've tried and failed many times before.' That is not what God wants. That is why He has given us the amazing power of the Holy Spirit so that He can do what we cannot. If the Lord Jesus were writing a letter to you and me what would He write to encourage us? What transformation, in His grace, has already taken place? In our prayers today let us ask Him to point out to us, in loving challenge, those areas of life in which He wants to see more change, then ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to make those changes possible. When an artist paints a portrait, the first sketch or outline is added to with beautiful colours and fine brush strokes until the picture is clear. We are to be the image, the picture of Christ to the world, so we pray the divine artist may paint His likeness in us. The words of the old song Keep Me Shining, Lord are a reminder to us to live in a way that people may see Christ through us: 'keep me shining Lord, keep me shining Lord, in all I say or do; that the world may see Christ lives in me, and learn to love Him too.' Pray that our five may see the Lord Jesus in the lives of His people.

Lamentations 3:21-26, 31-41 (NRSV)

21 But this I call to mind,

and therefore I have hope:

22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,[b]

his mercies never come to an end;

23 they are new every morning;

great is your faithfulness.

24 "The Lord is my portion," says my soul,

"therefore I will hope in him."

25 The Lord is good to those who wait for him,

to the soul that seeks him.

26 It is good that one should wait quietly

for the salvation of the Lord. ...

31 For the Lord will not

reject forever.

32 Although he causes grief, he will have compassion

according to the abundance of his steadfast love;

33 for he does not willingly afflict

or grieve anyone.

34 When all the prisoners of the land

are crushed under foot,

35 when justice is perverted

in the presence of the Most High,

36 when one's case is subverted—

does the Lord not see it?

37 Who can command and have it done,

if the Lord has not ordained it?

38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High

that evil and good come?

39 Why should any who draw breath complain

about the punishment of their sins?

40 Let us test and examine our ways

and return to the Lord.

41 Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands

to God in heaven.

**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.**