

Pentecost Novena



As the Risen Jesus prepared to leave his work in the hands of his followers, he told them to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Spirit. They gathered in the upper room and devoted themselves to constant prayer.

These days between the Feast of the Ascension and Pentecost are often considered to be the first Novena. We are invited to join those first disciples in nine days of prayer to ask God to prepare us to receive the Spirit so that our courage, hope and joy may be renewed.

Day 1

Today we pray for the grace to act as God does towards creation with caring, compassion and justice.

Opening prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Scripture

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God's spirit hovered over the water.”
(Genesis 1:1-2)

Reflection

The first image we encounter in the Bible is this beautiful picture of the spirit of God moving over the surface of the waters at the dawn of creation. Everything that follows in the scriptures is set in the context of the goodness of creation and our call to care for our common home.

This call is especially urgent today in the light of the climate emergency. Let's pray today that God's nurturing spirit will challenge and strengthen us to make profound changes

in our lifestyle. Changes that will prevent further damage to our environment and restore creation for the common good.

To ponder today

What changes can I make to better care for the gift of creation?

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit.

blow away division and despair.

Light your flame of courage and hope in us

and warm our hearts with wisdom and love.

Be our Helper, as we seek your ways of justice.

Be our Comforter, as we share your peace with our wounded world.

Be our Advocate, as we call for the fullness of life for all.

Amen.

Day 2

Today we pray for the grace to create a common dream of justice and peace.

Opening prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.

And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

And you will renew the face of the earth.

Scripture

“I will pour out my Spirit on all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men see visions.” (Joel 3:1)

Reflection

The prophet Joel looks to a future where God’s spirit will be poured out on all people – young and old – so that all may dream. The Spirit of God empowers us to imagine a world where all people and all creation may flourish, and to work with God, and with others, in making that dream a reality. As Pope Francis writes in *Fratelli Tutti*,

“Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all.” (#7)

To ponder today

What are my dreams for the world?

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit.
blow away division and despair.
Light your flame of courage and hope in us
and warm our hearts with wisdom and love.

Be our Helper, as we seek your ways of justice.
Be our Comforter, as we share your peace with our wounded world.
Be our Advocate, as we call for the fullness of life for all.
Amen.

Day 3

Today we pray for the grace to stand in solidarity with those who are oppressed and marginalised.

Opening prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Scripture

“The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour.” (Luke 4: 18-19)

Reflection

With these words, taken from the prophet Isaiah, Jesus announces his mission in the gospel of Luke. All eyes in his hometown synagogue are fixed upon him, as he declares to those gathered: “This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.”

As Jesus’ followers, filled with the Spirit of the Lord, we too are called to stand in solidarity with those who are oppressed, the poor and the captive. To join Jesus in dismantling systemic injustices. To witness to God’s love and work for the coming of his Kingdom.

To ponder today

What unjust system or practice can I seek to change in the world?

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit.
blow away division and despair.
Light your flame of courage and hope in us
and warm our hearts with wisdom and love.

Be our Helper, as we seek your ways of justice.
Be our Comforter, as we share your peace with our wounded world.
Be our Advocate, as we call for the fullness of life for all.
Amen.

Day 4

Today we pray for the grace to dialogue with openness, respect and concern for the common good.

Opening prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Scripture

"Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as you were all called into one and the same hope when you were called." (Ephesians 4:3-4)

Reflection

We belong to each other, one global humanity inhabiting one common home. Yet the human family is assailed by various forms of "us" and "them" bringing division and fragmentation. It is to this that our reading today speaks so powerfully. The Spirit comes to bring unity and peace.

This unity is not the same as uniformity. The Spirit does not bring just one language on the day of Pentecost but enables people to speak in and comprehend a multiplicity of languages. As we come together, enriched by our differences, and recognising our shared dignity as children of God, we can stand united against the evils of poverty, discrimination, and violence. As Pope Francis has said:

“It is neither a culture of confrontation nor a culture of conflict which builds harmony within and between peoples, but rather a culture of encounter and a culture of dialogue; this is the only way to peace.”

To ponder today

How can I seek to encounter others in dialogue and friendship?

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit.
blow away division and despair.
Light your flame of courage and hope in us
and warm our hearts with wisdom and love.

Be our Helper, as we seek your ways of justice.
Be our Comforter, as we share your peace with our wounded world.
Be our Advocate, as we call for the fullness of life for all.
Amen.

Day 5

Today we pray for the grace of renewed hope.

Opening prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Scripture

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)

Reflection

Surrounded by inequality, racism, poverty, environmental destruction, and the personal challenges each of us face, at times it can be hard to hold onto hope. But we are reminded today to trust in God and to celebrate hope, a hope evoked by the knowledge that God, through the Holy Spirit, is among us.

God has not abandoned the world but continues to be at work for the coming of the Kingdom. And we are invited to be active participants in that work as the Holy Spirit is

poured upon us. Today let's celebrate that we are called not to discouragement and despair but rather, to hope and action.

To ponder today

What signs of hope can I see in the world today?

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit.

blow away division and despair.

Light your flame of courage and hope in us

and warm our hearts with wisdom and love.

Be our Helper, as we seek your ways of justice.

Be our Comforter, as we share your peace with our wounded world.

Be our Advocate, as we call for the fullness of life for all.

Amen.

Day 6

Today we pray for the grace to realise we are all interconnected and to reach out in love to all the members of our human family.

Opening prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.

And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

And you will renew the face of the earth.

Scripture

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Reflection

When Jesus lived on earth, he lived a life of radical inclusion – freely associating with the poor, weak, outcast and foreigner - challenging his followers to take down barriers and bridge divides. Now just before his ascension into heaven he speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit which will call the disciples to witness to the gospel throughout the whole world.

As Pentecost people, we too are challenged to look outward, to seek to include others and look for the flourishing of all people and all creation. To welcome the immigrant and love the stranger. Empowered by the Spirit, we can take the healing, liberation, and joy that Jesus brings to the very ends of the earth.

To ponder today

How can I be a source of blessings to my neighbours both near and far?

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit.
blow away division and despair.
Light your flame of courage and hope in us
and warm our hearts with wisdom and love.

Be our Helper, as we seek your ways of justice.
Be our Comforter, as we share your peace with our wounded world.
Be our Advocate, as we call for the fullness of life for all.
Amen.

Day 7

Today we pray for the grace to listen deeply to God.

Opening prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Scripture

"Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches."
(Revelation 3:6)

Reflection

Throughout the scriptures God again and again invites us to listen to his life-giving word, and here in the final book of the Bible we once again hear this call. So how can we listen to the Spirit?

We can listen to our common home, as we allow nature to speak to us of the glory of God, the Creator. We must listen too as the earth cries out from the harm we have inflicted on it.

We can listen to what is happening in the world around us. To the voices of refugees and immigrants, to people living in poverty or enduring violence.

We can listen to our own experience, in the light of God's loving presence. And we can be attentive to God's word and the promptings of the Spirit in prayer.

To ponder today

Where do you find yourself hearing the voice of the Spirit?

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit.

blow away division and despair.

Light your flame of courage and hope in us

and warm our hearts with wisdom and love.

Be our Helper, as we seek your ways of justice.

Be our Comforter, as we share your peace with our wounded world.

Be our Advocate, as we call for the fullness of life for all.

Amen.

Day 8

Today we pray for the grace to be people of courage.

Opening prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.

And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

And you will renew the face of the earth.

Scripture

"In the evening of the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and, after showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" (John 20:19-22)

Reflection

As the disciples gather on the first day of the week, the Gospel of John tells us that the doors of the room were locked. Jesus has been crucified and the disciples are afraid and

hiding. Then the Risen Jesus appears and breathes on them, and they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. They are filled with courage as they embark on their mission to proclaim his love and share his compassion for all creation.

We too, perhaps, sometimes find ourselves behind the locked door of fear. Today let's invite the Holy Spirit to pour into us the gift of courage, so as Christ's body we may know and love our neighbours, act justly, make peace and care for creation.

To ponder today

Take time today to breathe mindfully – breathing in God's spirit and breathing out God's love.

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit.

blow away division and despair.

Light your flame of courage and hope in us
and warm our hearts with wisdom and love.

Be our Helper, as we seek your ways of justice.

Be our Comforter, as we share your peace with our wounded world.

Be our Advocate, as we call for the fullness of life for all.

Amen.

Day 9

Today we pray for the grace of a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Opening prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.

And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

And you will renew the face of the earth.

Scripture

"When Pentecost day came round, the apostles had all met in one room, when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and then something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech." (Acts 2:1-4)

Reflection

The community of disciples are all gathered for the Festival of Weeks, or Shavuot, a Jewish pilgrimage festival, celebrated 50 days after Passover, when the Spirit dramatically arrives as wind and fire.

The wind blows new life into the infant Church. It is no gentle breeze but a violent, rushing sound which disrupts complacency, blows away staleness and brings new vision and connection. May this wind sweep through our lives too with its energy and renewal.

The fire kindles the awareness of God's presence; reminding us of the burning bush and the pillar of flame which led the people of Israel. Fire to warm hearts and burn away past failures and divisions.

Yet, for all the drama Pentecost is only the beginning. We may not hear the wind or see the visible flames, but the Spirit continues to help us to learn new languages of love and expand our circle of compassion to include all creation.

To ponder today

Is there somewhere in your life where you sense the Spirit is inviting you to something new? How does that feel?

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit.
blow away division and despair.
Light your flame of courage and hope in us
and warm our hearts with wisdom and love.

Be our Helper, as we seek your ways of justice.
Be our Comforter, as we share your peace with our wounded world.
Be our Advocate, as we call for the fullness of life for all.
Amen.

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