

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.

Compassionate God, as we travel in hope as your disciples, We ask for the comfort and peace of the Holy Spirit on all who are broken hearted. Bless each of us as we journey in faith, walking in the footsteps of Jesus. Amen.

(Prayer written by Penny Lowe - Licensed Lay Minister at the Romney Marsh Benefice)

We meet your word with humble hearts, grateful to be able to practice our faith freely.

(Pause)

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

We give you thanks for listening to us, no matter how feeble our prayers may feel.

(Pause)

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

We offer to you our prayers for the Church, that she will lay down every idol.

(Pause)

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

We bear before you all who experience persecution for their faith.

(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 perseverance in praying for an end to all persecution.**

Come Holy Spirit: **gift us with stillness and silence to hear your voice.**

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

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 know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich."
(Revelation 2:9, NRSV)

REFLECTING

It is a wonderful thing when a child tells you their first joke. Perhaps they learned it at school and they have been practising it over and over again in their heads until they get home and can tell everyone else in the family! They laugh every time they tell it. Their family do too... even if it is one they have heard before. The fact that they already know the story doesn't stop them listening intently and receiving it as if for the first time. It is all about the relationship. When we pray, whether for ourselves, our friends or the huge issues of the nations – hunger, war, climate change, or poverty – we are not telling the Lord something He does not already know. We cannot surprise Him but He loves the relationship and the conversation, and in the silence we find our minds, hearts and wills become more aligned to the love and plan of God. It was like that for the church in Smyrna in today's verse. They lived in the most beautiful city, but its beauty was a backdrop for idol-worship and persecution of Christians. The idols today may take different forms – political ideas, what celebrities think, peer-group pressure – but the persecution of Christians is more prevalent today than at any time in history. So when we share our difficulties with the Lord we share our pressures, failures and fears with our brothers and sisters down the centuries and across the world. What we find is that the Lord reminds us of our riches. Ultimate power is not wielded by armies or politicians; it rests with our loving heavenly Father who never forgets us for a second. He is the Father who knows everything there is to know about us and who, if we have believed in Jesus, will see us through whatever this life throws at us and then welcome us into the glory of heaven forever. It was true for Christians in Smyrna two thousand years ago and it is true for us now. As well as praying for your five today, hold before God those who really suffer for their faith in Jesus and whom one day we will meet in glory. Let us remember that God understands what they have gone through, and let us continue to stand on that assurance that He also knows all that we go through. The Lord hears our prayers, and He answers them all with a 'yes', 'no' or 'wait'. When we tell Him of our doubts and how aware we are of our own sin, He reminds us that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and that His forgiveness is free and full. When we tell Him how powerless we feel, He reminds us of the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit.

When we bring our five friends to him and say that we do not know how to share Jesus with them, He reminds us that he has promised to give us the words and that there is no greater sermon than a Christ-like life.

Psalms 40:1-13 (NRSV)

- 1 I waited patiently for the Lord;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
- 2 He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.
- 3 He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.
- 4 Happy are those who make the Lord their trust,
who do not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after false gods.
- 5 You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts towards us; none can compare with you.
Were I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than can be counted.
- 6 Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear.
Burnt-offering and sin-offering you have not required.
- 7 Then I said, 'Here I am;
in the scroll of the book it is written of me.
- 8 I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart.'
- 9 I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation;
see, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Lord.
- 10 I have not hidden your saving help within my heart, I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;
I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.
- 11 Do not, O Lord, withhold your mercy from me;
let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe for ever.
- 12 For evils have encompassed me without number; my iniquities have overtaken me, until I cannot see;
they are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails me.
- 13 Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me;
O Lord, make haste to help me.

**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.**