

**Mears Ashby and Hardwick  
and Sywell with Overstone**



**Prayers and Reflections  
for use at home**

**Sunday 16 May 2021**

**Easter 7**

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. This week, we watch as the disciples wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Only with the guiding and the power of this most precious of gifts, God's own self, will they be wise and brave and strong enough to go in Jesus' name. Looking back, we know that they had ten days to wait. But, did they? Waiting can feel like a lifetime. If you had watched Jesus go, how would you have felt in that moment? And, as each day drew to a close?

While staying with them, Jesus ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'

So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'

*Acts 1:4-11*

May this season of waiting on God's Spirit be a fruitful one. If you wish, travel through these days with the help of the enclosed Prayer Journal.

Every blessing,

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**Prayers and Reflections to use at home  
on the Sunday after Ascension  
Seeking God's Protection**

**PREPARING OURSELVES**

*Take a moment to be still in God's presence and feel his love. If you are indoors, you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love - here, in your room. You may also wish to have a bowl of water ready for the time of letting go. When you are ready, say this joyous greeting.*

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

*Take a moment to feel the full power of these words.*

**LETTING GO**

*As daily life opens up a little more from Monday, we again ask ourselves, 'How shall I live life well and safely in this phase of the crisis?'. This is a space to open your heart to God's loving wisdom as you acknowledge how you are feeling.*

*If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, or fears and worries that you're struggling to carry, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And then, reflect on the opening words of this well-known hymn.*

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,  
forgive our foolish ways!

Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,  
in purer lives thy service find,  
in deeper reverence praise,  
in deeper reverence praise.

*If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.*





*Forgiven by God and set free to live a new life,  
a love-fuelled life, offer the week ahead to him.  
Seek his guidance. Receive his abiding peace.*

## **PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER (The Collect)**

*Across our villages and the worldwide Church,  
this prayer is being said today. Add your voice to this earthly circle  
of prayer to our loving Father.*

O God the King of glory,  
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ  
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:  
we beseech you, leave us not comfortless,  
but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us  
and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*Our prayer for today could have been uttered by Jesus' team as, looking  
up, they watched him go. Walking back into Jerusalem, they would have  
felt so very alone. It is hard to say goodbye to someone who has been  
your teacher and guide, your friend and companion, your everything.  
At that moment, the freedom that they have just been given to go and  
live and work in his name must have felt overwhelming. Yet, God did not  
send his Spirit to them immediately. Pause to wonder why this might be.  
Where is God in your times of waiting?*



Wait for the Lord,  
whose day is near.  
Wait for the Lord:  
keep watch take heart!

*Taizé Community*

## LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

### Jesus' prayer for his team

*In the upper room as the Last Supper draws to a close, Jesus prays to his Father asking him to protect his team in the tough days and weeks, months and years to come. Feel him pray this prayer for you too.*

Jesus said, 'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.'

*John 17:6-19*

## **Jesus' prayer for us**

*Jesus' prayer for his team, and for us, is that he will be their true vine, and our true rosebush, and that we - his branches - will always be at one with him, rooted and grounded in his love. He doesn't pray that that life will be easy for them or us, but that his Father will protect us as we live through life's challenges and try our very best to serve him. As Jesus was their teacher and guide, and their protection from tough questions and temptations, so he prays his Father will be for us. It is a prayer for God's sending of his Spirit to us. For it is his Spirit who keeps us close to Jesus, God's Son, and his Father in heaven. And, it is his Spirit who keeps us also at one with ourselves. He is our source of inner peace and desire to care as Jesus cares for the hurting people and places. We cannot experience life as it is designed to be without being at one with the Designer.*

*Take a moment to re-read the prayer and drink in its key words: Protect - Truth - Joy - Be One - Send. Be attentive to how you are feeling as you prayerfully read this prayer of protection. Offer your prayer of response to our God who always listens.*

## **A Season of Prayer**

*After Jesus had left his team to return to his Father in heaven, this is what they did next.*

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

*Acts 1:12-14*

*They did what Jesus would have done in their place - they prayed. Not just one prayer but many prayers. Praying became their way of life as they waited on God's coming. Listening will have been a key part of this.*

*Inspired by Jesus and his team, the worldwide Church devotes herself to prayer in the season between Ascension and Pentecost, inviting God's Spirit to come and bless, strength and guide, encourage and inspire us - collectively and individually. If you would like to join in this season of prayer and prayerful listening, you can do so with the help of the prayer journal enclosed with these prayers and reflections.*

*May you sense your need of God's Spirit in this season of your life and be blessed with a strong sense of his presence and protection.*

### **A Prayer of Protection**



Loving God,  
our hearts are restless  
till they find their rest in you.  
Hold me when the storms of life rage  
and the waves crash over me.  
Be my rest and my security.  
Help me to know  
that everything good and beautiful  
comes from you,  
including the precious gift of love.  
Hold me in your loving care and embrace,  
as I hold others in mine.  
In your Son's name,  
I pray. **Amen.**      *Adapted from Stephen Cottrell*

### **OUR PRAYERS**

*Here are some prayers for this season of praying for God's protective love and guiding Spirit. Feel free to add your own.*

Holy Spirit, living breath of God, pour your life into mine.  
Fill me with what I need at this time,  
your love and compassion, your courage and strength,  
your energy and enthusiasm. May my life reflect your life,  
and my words echo your words.

Holy Spirit, hear my prayer.

Holy Spirit, our world is holding its breath,  
waiting for a time when suffering will be no more.  
You have the power to make us one as you and the Father and the Son  
are one; one in your loving desire for us and all your creatures.  
Come and heal the human divisions and disagreements,  
which are the cause of so much pain. I lift up to you...

Holy Spirit, hear my prayer.

Holy Spirit, you give us life and breath,  
direction and meaning. You have the power to bring order out of chaos,  
and to quieten anxious minds. Come into the lives of those who are  
finding life difficult at this time. Bring inner peace to those whose days  
are filled with sadness, and healing and hope to those living with the pain  
and frailties of ill-health. I lift up to you...

Holy Spirit, hear my prayer.

*Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.*

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## **PRAYER OF BLESSING**

*A closing prayer of blessing for this season of God's protection.*

Holy Spirit, come and meet me where I am,  
this Ascension. Brighten my life with your joy and peace,  
so that I may radiate your love and hope in my daily life.  
Keep me, and my loved ones, safe in your love. **Amen.**