

# Week of Prayer for Overcoming Racism, Xenophobia, and Related Discrimination

19-25 March 2024



**World Council  
of Churches**



**PRAYER ONE**

**Preludio musical / Musical Prelude** (*solo de quenas andinas*)

♪ **Inti Illimani - Solo de quena**

**Introduction**

Good day sisters and brothers. This week we, in the Ecumenical movement, commit ourselves to pray for and with and stand in solidarity with racialized communities from around the world, Indigenous Peoples from all over the world, People of African Descent from around the world, People of Asian Descent from around the world, People of mixed racial heritage from around the world, Africans and Asians both in their continents and also in the diáspora. We want to lift up People of African Descent living in Latin America, Indigenous Peoples in Latin America and all the sisters and brothers who have stood up and continue to stand up for and with these racialized communities. We are thankful to a team of sisters and brothers from Latin America who prepared the prayers we are using throughout this week of prayer for overcoming racismo, xenophobia and related discrimination Campaign.

*Moment of Silence*

**Invocation**

Divinity that encompasses all colors,  
That you embrace equally to browns and whites,  
to blacks and to yellows, to reds and to grays,  
'Cause before your eyes we are all children of your creative love.  
Draw near to your gathered people today,  
Renew efforts to build fair and inclusive societies,  
who rejoice in diversity and they celebrate encounter and mutuality. **Amen**

♪ **Canción: Dios nos recibe** (*God welcomes all*)

Gerardo Oberman  
Encuentro Red Create  
México 2014

*Moderato*

Dios nos re - ci - be, es - ta/es su ca - sa, nos da su paz  
God wel-comes all, we're at God's house. God gives us peace

y nos a - bra - za. Dios nos re - ci - be, es - ta/es su ca - sa,  
and em-braces our lives. God wel-comes all, we're at God's house.

nos da su paz y nos a - bra - za.  
God give us peace and em - braces our lives.

**Bible Reading, Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)**

<sup>25</sup> At this point an expert in the law came and stood up and asked Jesus this question: "Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, "What is written in the Law?" How do you interpret it? <sup>27</sup> In reply, the man quoted: —"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>28</sup> "Well answered," Jesus said. Do that and you will live. <sup>29</sup> But he wanted to be justified, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" <sup>30</sup> Jesus answered, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him, and left, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest was traveling along the same road, and when he saw him, he turned aside and went on his way. <sup>32</sup> A Levite also came to the place, and when he saw him, he turned aside and went on his way. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan who was traveling came to the man and saw him and took pity on him. <sup>34</sup> He came and dressed his wounds with wine and oil and bound them up. Then he mounted him on his own horse, took him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two pieces of silver and gave them to the owner of the inn. "Take care of me," he said, "and whatever you overspend, I'll pay you back when I get back." <sup>36</sup> Which of these three do you think proved to be the neighbor of the one who fell into the hands of thieves? <sup>37</sup> "He who had compassion on him," said the expert in the law. "Go then and do likewise," Jesus concluded.

The Word of God,  
**Thanks be to God.**

**Reflection**

"How do you read?" Jesus asks. How do you interpret what the Scriptures say? How do you approach that which, from your faith, you recognize as the inspired word of God?

The question of the teacher of the law is genuine and relates to something that people of faith have asked themselves for generations: how can we attain eternal life? It would not be fair to think that there is not a sincere longing on the part of that teacher who draws near to Jesus.



But Jesus, anticipating Paulo Freire and his pedagogy of the question by millennia, responds with the questions with which we begin this brief reflection.

The Scriptures themselves are not indifferent to pain, to discrimination, to mistreatment, to all that is unjust. On the contrary, they are quite clear and forceful and it is necessary to review the way in which we read and interpret those texts that for centuries and centuries have been there to mobilize the witness of the daughters and sons of God.

It so happens that, for a long time, centuries perhaps, these challenging passages have been read from prejudice, from ambition, from places of privilege, constructing a theology convenient to sustain policies of oppression and death.

The people of Samaria were despised, mistreated, ignored by those who had the same blood, but they had been injected with hatred from the family teachings and the preaching of their religious leaders.

Jesus differs from these cultural and theological conditionings and not only approaches Samaria, treading on "unholy" territory, but also converses with a Samaritan woman by a well, making her the protagonist of one of the most intimate stories that the Gospels give us. And in this story that we share today, the character who becomes an example to imitate is precisely a Samaritan. A Samaritan who embodies solidarity, compassion, empathy with the pain of those who appear on his path. The Samaritan becomes a neighbor to those who suffer, to those who are on the verge of death, despised by other people.

In Jesus there are no longer boundaries of race, religion, culture, or social status, but Christ is all in all people (cf. Colossians 3:11)

## Intercessory Prayers

**L:** In a world where the colour of our skin, the place where we were born, the land we inhabit, the religion of our heart, or our sexuality define how we are treated, remind us, good God, that you love us for who we are: the workmanship of your hands, kneaded and kneaded from the clay to receive life by the breath of your Spirit.

**R: Remind us God**

**L:** We intercede for our native peoples in our countries, peoples who have been annihilated by those who appropriated their lands, their culture, their lives and their dreams and who are still victims of repressive political powers.

**R: Remember all the Indigenous Peoples from around the world, Holy Trinity.**

**L:** We think of the families of those who have been killed for defending their ancestral sites, like Rafael Nahuel. We think of those who have accompanied the struggles of their indigenous sisters and brothers, such as Santiago Maldonado. We think of those who have worked for the well-being of their peoples and who suffer imprisonment, persecution and stigmatization, like Milagro Sala. We think of those who have come together to claim their rights and to confront the powers that only seek profit, such as the women and men of the *Third Evil for Peace*.

**R: Holy Trinity, help us to never forget those who have walked this path ahead of us. Bless them in this life and the life that comes.**

**L:** In times when hatred is growing and when the social fragmentation fostered by a system that excludes and kills continues to divide us, we ask that the Gospel of grace, which announces to us the freedom and fullness and possibility of the other world, embrace, restore and strengthen us to continue fighting for a common home with space for all



creatures. Respectful of diversity and committed to the unrestricted defense of the good life.

**R: Bless us and care for us, God of all tenderness and compassion. Through Jesus Christ, we ask you. Amen.**

♪ Song/Hymn

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal**

**May the warm sun of your righteousness embrace our dreams.  
May the hope of your kingdom drive us like a mountain wind.  
May solidarity flow like the waters of our millenary rivers.  
And may your loving grace guide us through valleys of fruitfulness.  
God of the winds, of fire, of earth and of waters,  
renew us, bless us, shelter us like a tender Mother. Amen.**



## **PRAYER TWO**

### **Opening**

Come Holy Spirit make Your Presence known in this time.

Thank You for Your love and forgiveness, O God, extended to us through the death of Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

Make these moments a sanctuary in time to enter into Your loving Presence.

Move in hearts throughout the world bringing love, joy, and peace.

### **Silence**

### **Prayer for the Human Family**

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*(Book of Common Prayer, 1979, Episcopal Church U.S.A., page 815)*

### **Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:11-22**

So then, remember that at one time you gentiles by birth,<sup>14</sup> called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—<sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.<sup>14</sup> For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us,<sup>15</sup> abolishing the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,<sup>16</sup> and might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.<sup>17</sup> So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near,<sup>18</sup> for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.<sup>19</sup> So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,<sup>20</sup> built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone;<sup>21</sup> in him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord,<sup>22</sup> in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

The Word of God,  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **Reflection:**



Think for a moment of church buildings, spaces created with various materials in a wide variety of styles. Some have a simple beauty. Others are immense cathedrals of stone. Some were created with a modern design. Others preserve the architecture of ages past. All of them are designed to be places for Christians to gather to seek the Presence of the Lord in worship.

In the first century before AD 70 stood the Temple. The entire Temple complex took up one sixth of the area in the city of Jerusalem. The Temple platform was built upon a hill hundreds of feet above the valley below. Its white marble rose up majestically and was adorned with gold at the top reflecting brightly in the sun. It was an architectural wonder. The Temple was thought to be the place where the Presence of God dwelt on earth.

The Apostle Paul is using this image of the magnificent Temple, as a metaphor for the people of God. A variety of human “stones”, from different quarries come together, joined as one, to create a living temple. The place where God dwells is now among His people. (As Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered in my name I am in the midst of them.”) This new edifice, which is the people of God, is founded upon the apostles and the prophets. Jesus is the cornerstone. It is a beautiful image of very different people being joined together as one in Christ.

But how did this come to be? Paul tells us it is through the cross of Christ. Paul emphasizes that Jesus’ death on the cross brought divergent people groups together. Jesus’ death broke down the wall that separated Jew and Gentile. Having first unified them, Paul then tells us that Christ reconciled the one unified humanity to God. All too often in the West, we think of the result of Jesus reconciling work on the cross as restoring us *individually* in relationship to God. It does that yes – but here Paul speaks first of the power of the cross of Christ to *reconcile people with one another*. Then as one united humanity, they are reconciled to God. Christ’s redeeming work tears down walls that separate human beings from one another and brings them together.

God loves diversity. He has created a universe of such beauty and diversity. There are thousands of species of fish, varieties of birds, mammals of all kinds, and human beings of different ethnicities, cultures, and histories. But God also desires unity. He seeks to bring the diversity of peoples together in Christ. It is not just Jew and Gentile that God brings together, but rather people from every tribe and ethnicity will dwell around the throne of God. The cross of Christ shows us the reconciling work of God – reconciling people with one another and reconciling that one new humanity to God. Just as a church or the Temple joins various construction materials together to create a majestic worship space, so too Jesus, the cornerstone, joins people from every ethnicity together. The result is a beautiful, majestic church! This is good news for our divided world. This is good news worth sharing. This is good news that offers hope for racial reconciliation. Jesus is this Good News and the hope of the world.

## Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. **Amen.**

♪ **Alleluia Sing to Jesus**



Alleluia! Sing to Jesus; His the scepter, His the throne.  
Alleluia! His the triumph, His the victory alone.  
Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion thunder like a mighty flood:  
"Jesus out of every nation has redeemed us by His blood."

Alleluia! Not as orphans are we left in sorrow now.  
Alleluia! He is near us; faith believes, nor questions how.  
Tho' the cloud from sight received Him when the forty days were o'er,  
shall our hearts forget His promise, "I am with you evermore"?

Alleluia! Bread of heaven, here on earth our food, our stay.  
Alleluia! Here the sinful flee to You from day to day.  
Intercessor, Friend of sinners, earth's Redeemer, hear our plea  
where the songs of all the sinless sweep across the crystal sea.

W. Chatterton Dix (1866), Public Domain

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Blessing** (*Ephesians 3:20, 21*)

**Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.**





### **PRAYER THREE**

#### **A Call to Prayer**

The Lord our God is a fountain of grace and mercy. Let us draw near to Him with grateful hearts that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us when we need it.

♪ **When peace like a river attendeth my way**

#### **Prayer**

Ever Living God, we bless You. We proclaim Your goodness and constant deliverance over all the earth. O Father of all mercies, we humbly beseech You that you forgive our trespasses and show us mercy. As we receive Your word into our hearts, please cause it to lighten our paths and strengthen our minds through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

#### **Scripture Reading: Psalm 107: 12 - 15**

Their hearts were bowed down with hard labour;  
they fell down, with no one to help.

<sup>13</sup> Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,  
and he saved them from their distress;

<sup>14</sup> he brought them out of darkness and gloom,  
and broke their bonds apart.

<sup>15</sup> Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,  
for his wonderful works to humankind.

The Word of God,  
**Thanks be to God.**

#### **Reflection**

Enslavement of people has existed throughout the world since ancient times and trading in enslaved persons has been equally universal. The nature of slavery in the past records brutality, inhumane treatment, hard labor and the like. It was really a dark world for enslaved people as their humanity, dignity and freedom was taken away from them and the image of God denied them. Slavery victimized both individuals and nations. It took away lives of enslaved peoples through hunger, suffocation, harsh working conditions and cruel forms of execution. It depicted limitation, restriction and discomfort. The enslavement of Africans and their trafficking across the Atlantic Ocean began in the 1500s and ran until the 1800s. This act victimized many countries and individuals. It exposed victims to torture, murder, inhumane treatment, economic and agricultural disturbances etc. A classic example in scripture is the life of the Israelites in the land of Egypt. However, the Israelites when in slavery in Egypt cried out to God and God heard them from heaven and delivered them (*Exodus 2: 23-25*).

This God who heard the groanings of the Israelites and delivered them is the same God yesterday, today, and forever. He sent His Son Jesus Christ to call all of us in various forms of bondages, bondage into the systems of human empires, bondages into material wealth of this world, bondage into various systems of inequality, bondage into systems that perpetuate



injustices, bondage into our unwillingness to question privileges that we receive without asking for them or meriting them into freedom on the cross. He opens His arms to people around the world to deliver us from slavery and welcome us into His Kingdom as daughters and sons but some have not heeded the call and have become slaves to sin, the flesh and evil. The Bible explains this to the core: “whoever commits sin is a slave of sin... If the son makes you free, you are free indeed” (John 8:34,36). Sometimes due to prolonged experience and limitations bondages come with, we become numb to their effects on our life to the point that their effects become normal to our lives and thus we become comfortable living with it.

As we remember the victims of slavery and Trans- Atlantic Slave trade, we also pray for people around the world who have been trapped in the bondage of systems, sin and evil. This whole world lies in wickedness, the Bible says and it is up to believers not to just believe in God and serve Him so as to make it to heaven but also be available and accessible so that through us the world might be saved. We will rise in prayer and thanksgiving, and the Lord will save God’s people from their distress, break down chains of distress and breathe God’s peace over all the earth once again.

We are no more slaves! In Christ we are free and we are free indeed.

## Prayers of intercession

L: The peace of the Lord be with you

**R: And with your Spirit.**

L: Father in heaven, You are our only savior and redeemer. You bring victims out of their gloom and darkness and save them from distress

**R: We praise You oh Lord our God for Your constant love and wonderful deeds.**

L: As we gather this day, we lift up and remember the lives of all victims of enslavement from around the world, give their souls eternal peace.

**R: Grant them eternal peace through your son, our Lord Jesus Christ.**

L: Today, we remember all the survivors of enslavement and trafficking and descendants of enslaved peoples from all over the world, we thank you for preserving their lives in places to which human wickedness sent them but in which your grace preserved them. Strengthen them to remember their past, reclaim their present and reimagine a future that acknowledges their humanity, dignity and place on your table as nothing but your image.

**R: Grant them the strength to claim and assert their place on your table while shunning the tables set all around them by exploitative and racist systems of this world.**

L: The world is full of sin, war, evil, sickness and brutality

**R: As we lift our voices to You in prayer, invoke the intercessory arm of the Holy Spirit on our behalf with groanings that cannot be uttered.**

L: You satisfy those who are thirsty and fill the hungry with good things



**R:** For this, we are grateful to You and pray for continuance of Your provision over the world.

**L:** Lord hear our prayer

**R:** And let our requests be made known to You. Amen

### The Lord's Prayer

♪ Hymn/Song

### Benediction

**Holy Triune God, in your image and likeness, you created humankind.**

**May your grace and love remind us of your ever presence in our lives.**

**May the attempts to break us into denying our likeness to you fail in your name.**

**We mourn for our departed enslaved ancestors,**

**but we celebrate them for their bravery, and resilience.**

**Give us their strength, make us agents of racial justice today and tomorrow.**

**Make us radiate your Glory in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

**Amen.**

*May the Peace of the Lord be with you!*

## **PRAYER FOUR**

### **Call to Prayer**

Praise be to the Holy Triune God!  
In whom we all have our likeness!  
For whom our diversity presented a perfect Creation!  
To whom we are all called to turn in times of joy and sorrow, plenty and scarcity!  
Praise be to the Holy Trinity.  
**Amen.**

### **♪ Hymn: Oh Freedom**

Oh, freedom, Oh, freedom,  
Oh freedom over me.  
And before I'd be a slave  
I'd be buried in my grave  
And go home to my Lord and be free.

No more weepin, (don't you know), no more weepin,  
no more weepin over me.  
And before I'd be a slave  
I'd be buried in my grave  
And go home to my Lord and be free.

### **Prayer**

Holy Triune God, we gather this day to listen intently to your call for us to recognize and acknowledge your Image and Likeness in our neighbours, sisters and brothers. We thank you for creating us not in our own image or likeness but in your image and likeness. We commit this gathering to you because you are God, the author and finisher of our lives and all creation. Enable us to see the reality of racism, xenophobia, casteism and all other forms of discrimination that deny or undermine your image and likeness in some of your people. Give us strength not to only see the reality of these sins but to stand up to them, to call them out whenever they manifest in our lives. Give us righteous anger to be pained and traumatized every time your people are racially discriminated, exposed to xenophobia, caste discrimination or discriminated based on socially made stereotypes. We invite you to decisively intervene in our societies, nations and world and make us your agents of transformation. This we pray in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 12: 16 - 19**

<sup>16</sup> When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: "What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents, Israel! Look after your own house, David!" So the Israelites went home. <sup>17</sup> But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them. <sup>18</sup> King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labor, but all Israel stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. <sup>19</sup> So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

The Word of the Lord  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **Reflection**

The outcomes of the global lockdowns triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic have left many of us with bad taste in the mouth! As we emerged out of the unprecedented global imprisonment that we endured, we heard the makers of rules had their own rules or is it that they did not have any rules at all? We heard that the richest doubled or tripled their wealth when all others lost, or is it that the pandemic created an opportunity for wealth to be transferred from the poor to the richest? When the rich states using brilliant minds from all over the world created a vaccine that could save lives, they reasoned that lives were not equally important therefore they would not share the life-saving vaccines with the poor because poor lives did not really matter! Alongside other factors, weak economies were bludgeoned to death by the pandemic, putting more pressure on people and forcing them to look for greener pastures and the response from the richer countries was to create newer, bigger, expensive and more complex systems for those intending to travel in order to create a mass of “illegal migrants” and cleanse themselves of the guilt of presiding over thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea, in the English Channel, along the border of the USA and Mexico and in Asia. Black Lives Matter peaked and waned during the same period but the reality is Black Lives Still Do Not Matter in this World! Black bodies and lives are still the best form of collateral, picked for profit and picked for massacre! While in the Citadels of global power, we are pleading for climate responses that can stem the tide, as if the tide is still some way off, in the Pacific Islands black bodies are witnessing their ancestral graves drown, their ancestral homes drown, their children’s playgrounds drown, their livelihoods drown, their very lives drown! The world waits to see what happens when they drown!

The text we have read today tells of a sad but necessary chapter in the life of the 12 tribes of Israel. The Bible says after David became King, he succeeded in having all the tribes to be loyal to him, and upon his death he handed over the throne to his son, King Solomon. However, when Solomon died, the other tribes other than Judah, David’s own tribe came to the point of asking “What share do we have in David?” This is an important question and maybe, one that is due another round of being raised. David and Solomon, we learn were great Kings and we are not even to raise questions of the historicity of these claims, it is not necessary. We learn from others that the strength of any society is seen by how well their poorest live. What do we learn from the Bible that can help us to understand the question raised by the tribes other than Judah? In order to fund a monarchy and all its excesses, David and Solomon introduced – taxation to raise the wealth to fund their palaces, forced labour to get work done, conscripted men to serve as their soldiers, provoked wars with neighbours where they sent soldiers and collected the spoils of war. These innovations and measures were especially imposed on the tribes except Judah. The system created by David and Solomon was such that ordinary Israelites were responsible for making sure the King’s palace ate their fill even if they were not assured of their own fill from their own produce. With a fixed royal house, the system created a permanent division among the tribes, the tribes to be ruled and the tribe to rule. With God invoked as the author of this system, there was no respite for the Israelites.

The first step taken by the oppressed and exploited Israelites was a conciliatory and maybe even reasonable one, they made a conditional promise to the son of Solomon, “Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.” Having inherited the narratives of bondage and servitude in Egypt from their



ancestors, they were willing to continue to serve but the burden had to be moderated. The young king felt his authority was being undermined and instead responded by threatening to double what his father did. To which, they responded with the question, “What share do we have in David?” A system that was unaccountable under the guise that it was accountable to God pushed the oppressed to the precipice. In Egypt, we learn that it took 400 years before the Hebrews asked, “What share do we have in this system?” This question is not a question about dismantling the system of David but rather a question for constructing an alternative system to that of David.

For more than 400 years, this world has enslaved, colonized, plundered, assassinated, sought to exterminate Indigenous Peoples, Africans and People of African Descent, divided families and made strangers of them to each other, exterminated our memories of self, introduced ways of knowing and knowledge to commit epistemicide and spiritualicide leaving many in liminal spaces neither belonging with their ancestors or with their colonizers. We extend hands of friendship to this world and this world rejects this hand, for how long shall we wait until we can raise the question, “What is our share in this racist world?” This is not a question for racialized communities, in truth this is a question for all who are victims of this racist political, economic and cultural system. Let us not be blinded by the trinkets that are thrown our way because Jeroboam saw beyond the trinkets and realized he was a glorified slave put in charge of other slaves. The richest did not transfer wealth only from Africans, Asians and Indigenous Peoples, they transferred even more from those that also look like them. “What is our share in this racist, capitalist, asymmetrical world? Who are our allies, who is with us?”

### **Prayers of Lamentation, Thanksgiving and Intercession**

**L:** Oh Lord God, we lament and cry out to the High Heavens. We lift up our cries to you and remember all our ancestors who died at the hands of a racist system that denied their humanity and dignity, exposed them to inhuman working conditions without remuneration, they were called to die! We lament all the men and women who were labelled liabilities to complete their trafficking into the Americas and were thrown overboard into the vast Ocean. We lament all the unborn babies who were not allowed to see the light of day because their mothers nurturing them were thrown overboard the enslavers’ ships into the vast Ocean.

**R:** **We lament and mourn for their lives. Gracious God grant them eternal peace!**

**L:** We lift up all the people of God who have lost their lives trying to reach what they have been told is their heaven on earth, where they will have better lives but which places, they never got to see. We lament these avoidable deaths. We lament the hopes, aspirations and dreams that have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea, the Pacific Ocean, the Rio Grande River, the English Channel and those that have been scorched in the Sahara Desert and all those that have disappeared in the forests and jungles around the world.

**R:** **We lament and mourn for their lives. May you grant us a heart to feel this pain and to stand up against the systems that manufacture this pain wherever we encounter them.**

**L:** We thank you our Lord and God because even when we were meant to be exterminated, your grace located us. We thank you for the protective sheath that laid upon our ancestors who survived all manner of atrocities and still found the resilience to persevere and to co-



create with you. We are gathered today because of the survivors, who you hid and fed. We lift our voices in praise and awe of your greatness and glory.

**R: Receive our thanksgiving, not because it is adequate but because you have always been gracious.**

L: Holy Trinity, we thank you for you have taught us the meaning of love, for you loved us by creating us in your image and likeness. We thank you for the beauty that is visible in this world due to the diversity that you implanted in your creation. We thank you for providing us with all the necessities of life that as we feed off your Creation, your Creation also feeds off us, we thank you for this divine design. We thank you for the various ways in which you are reminding us that we are not above Creation, we are part of your Creation. We thank you for all our relatives, your Creation.

**R: Praise be to God, for creating us to be in relationship with all our relatives, the totality of God's Creation.**

L: Holy Trinity, the author and finisher of life in all its forms, we prostrate ourselves before you seeking your guidance. Guide us to steward your Creation to your Glory. Give us the wisdom to know when we are using and when we are abusing your Creation. Guide us to be responsible adults as we give direction to young people in a world that thrives on inequalities opposed to your Good News. Accompany parents and guardians and all those that work with children and young people. Help us develop compassion and righteous anger to stand in solidarity and to act in solidarity with all those who are being discriminated around the world.

**R: Bless us with righteous anger, energize us to cause good trouble and empower us to ask the oppressive systems of this world, "what share do we have in you?"**

L: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

**R: As it was in the beginning, and not as it is now, we shall stand to reclaim what it was, Creation in harmony, and in Unity and governed by the Justice of God.  
Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Sending out and blessing**

**Go and be an agent of God's righteous anger every time injustice rears its sinful face. Racism is a sin, choose to be anti-racist, speak out, act out the love of Christ for the sake of the humanity, dignity and life of your neighbour. God help us, give us courage and accompany us always. Amen**

*May the Peace of Christ follow you wherever you go.*



**PRAYER FIVE**

**Call to Prayer:**

Come people of God, and let us call upon the Holy Spirit  
to touch us with passionate faith to fire us with hope  
and to bless us with understanding of the Gospel!

This is a day that God has made:

**We will rejoice and be glad in it!**

♪ **Hymn/Song (of the Holy Spirit)**

*Examples: 'There's a spirit in the air' by Brian Wren OR*

*'Veni Sancte Spiritus' - Taizé*

**Prayer**

Let us bless God, for God has made us all for life in its fullness,  
and blesses us with joy deeper than any sorrow.

Let us bless God, for God has come to us in Jesus to show us in a human life  
the depth and breadth and tenderness of God's love.

Let us bless God, for God is with us in the Holy Spirit  
bringing to life even those dry as dust, and stirring to laughter even those who weep.

We bless you, eternal God, Holy Trinity, generous in love, overflowing with grace  
to fill our every emptiness and heal our pain,  
revealing our beauty and getting us on our feet.

Come and put your arms around all those in need of love and justice this day,  
that lives may be changed and hope renewed. **Amen.**

**Prayer of Confession**

We confess that our own lives are not perfect and our world is loud with violence and division.  
The poor are more vulnerable than the rich and the strong are not always generous or wise.  
Some people are given the first place, while others are cast out, ridiculed or exploited.

But we know that suffering and cruelty are not your will and that greed and injustice do not  
belong to you. And so, we pray for forgiveness and mercy for our own lives and for the life of  
the world. We pray for all to be changed, made holy, blessed by your love and redeemed by your  
grace.

**Thanks be to you O God, whose mercy is full and whose power to restore is great.**

**May this day be a day of new beginning for each one of us,**

**for the church to which we all belong and for the world in which we live. Amen.**

**Scripture Reading: Acts 2: 1-12**

<sup>1</sup> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they





were sitting.<sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

<sup>5</sup> Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.<sup>7</sup> Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?’ <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ <sup>12</sup> All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’

The Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

## Reflection

In Los Angeles, the city of the angels, in the USA, there is a small street called Azusa Street. It was in this little back street that what we now call the Pentecostal movement had a remarkable beginning in 1906. The Azusa Street story is one of the most powerful moments of the last century. There was a black preacher there, the son of people formerly enslaved, and he preached to the poor and the downtrodden of turn-of-the-twentieth-century Los Angeles. And through his ministry, blessed by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the church was set alight.

There are three things about the story of that beginning that have powerful echoes in the story of Acts 2 and that might just have echoes in our stories today.

Firstly, he preached as a man convinced that a new world is coming, that life doesn’t have to be as it is and that there is hope, because God is on the side of the poor and the dispossessed. Secondly, his little congregation, that quickly grew to be a larger one and then part of something that spread like wild fire around the world, had an experience of God so profound that their lives were never the same. The people weren’t persuaded by an argument or delighted by a rhetorical style – they had a real experience of the love and power of God.

And thirdly, the people created a community in which people overcame any sense of distinction between communities or ethnicities. This was a church without a colour bar – and it’s hard to convey how very significant that was in early twentieth century Los Angeles. Those three things; the hope and vision of a better world, a really *felt* experience of God and a radically inclusive church, were what the Azusa Street revival was about.

And that’s also what the coming of the Holy Spirit was about when the first disciples experienced it too. It was in a back-street Jerusalem rather than suburban Los Angeles. It was among Jews oppressed by the Roman Empire rather than in a marginalised community of former enslaved people in America. They sang different songs and experienced the presence of God in different ways, but it was also a real, immediate and amazing experience of God, also a vision of better world, also a realisation of a powerfully inclusive church.



Seeing these two stories set side by side, we can ask what stories we might tell. Do we have a vision of a better world? Have we experienced God - and not just at second hand, but as profoundly as we've experienced anything? And do we have a real conviction that God comes to all people, and not just people who look like us? The story of the coming of the Holy Spirit (wherever it is known and told) is really not about worship styles or spiritual practices. It's about people discovering that an experience of God can change the world and the way you see it. And that can happen to anyone – anyone - to people from any part of the world or the church. An experience of God like that is not just for white people or rich people or together people. It's for all of us.

Rowan Williams often repeats the simple phrase, 'The world doesn't have to be this way.' We don't have to have a world of poverty and racism, hunger and war. This world could be different and in God's good time it will be. We must keep alive the dream of a better world and find the places where it can already be seen. And let's make sure that the church is one place where it can be glimpsed, in a community with open doors that is knowing and living the truth that God loves every single human being. Racism and prejudice are so visible in many places in our world, BUT the Holy Spirit comes to bring a vision of a very different kind of human community. It happened in Jerusalem, it happened in Azusa Street, and it's coming to the street where you live too. Praise God!

## **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession**

Thank you God for all that has blessed our lives, for the bodies that you have given us, for voices and music to treasure, traditions and stories that have made us, for places we love and the land on which we walk, for those moments when we stand just wondering before the beauty of the world and all its people.

Thank you for the people we love and who love us, for those who have nurtured and taught us, and for those you have given us to love and care for, for the faith we have found and share and the vision of a world you are making where all people shall be free, recognised and celebrated.

♪ **Sung response: O Lord, hear my prayer...**

We come to pray, to give voice to our longing for a more loving, gentle and just world, a world where all may have bread, a world without hate, a world where it is natural to have hope and faith and trust. We come to pray that the wounded ones, the exploited ones, the tired and exhausted ones, the sorrowful and the despairing may find the kind of blessing that could make life bearable again and bring the promise of joy.

♪ **Sung response: O Lord, hear my prayer...**

We remember those ridiculed or slighted, discriminated against or despised because of their ethnicity or history. We open our eyes to see what happens and we tell our stories of what is done. We remember those made subject to violence, poverty and injustice because of who they are. We hear the shots and see the blood, we acknowledge the injustice and we cry aloud in anger. We pray for an end to racism and false supremacy, for a world in which all can know that all people are made in your image. Help us to make a world where all can live in safety, dignity and hope, where all will care for each other, that we might live as one family, one human race.



♪ **Sung response: O Lord, hear my prayer...**

We pray for a church that could be truly a community of wonder and hope and faith, an attractive gathering of those who have found bread for the journey. We pray for communities that will embrace all your people with warmth and welcome. We pray for a world blessed with peace with no-one left out or left behind. We pray for the grace and imagination to keep these prayers alive in our hearts and the hope before us that your reign may truly come and your will may really, one day, be done here among us and for all to see.

♪ **Sung response: O Lord, hear my prayer...**

Bless all who mourn and all who grieve, bless all in despair and in the deepest trouble. May hope be carried to the frail and weak and may joy be known amongst the sad. And let us trust today and always that you are with us whatever life brings and whoever we are. May the blessing of your Son touch each life and the life of your Spirit come to every heart.

♪ **Sung response: O Lord, hear my prayer...**

We offer these prayers in confidence and in faith. **Amen.**

We remember that the prayer Jesus taught us was originally spoken in Aramaic, then written down and repeated in Greek, translated into Latin and now into countless languages, spoken, sung and prayed all around the world, in every continent, in cities, villages, favelas and tower blocks, in refugee camps and retirement homes, in palaces and in tents. Let us say it now in the language of our own heart and listen for the echoes of all those other tongues praying with us...

## **The Lord's Prayer**

♪ **Hymn** (*ex. He came down – from Cameroon*)

## **Sending/Blessing**

**Go now into the rest of this day with the Spirit of God singing in your heart, confident that a better world is coming, and that you are welcome there...**

**May God who created you and loves you, bless you.**

**May Jesus call your name this day so that you will know you are beloved.**

**May the Holy Spirit come in power upon you and give you hope. Amen.**



## **PRAYER SIX**

### **Invitation to Prayer**

All humans are made in the image of God. Jesus taught that we should avoid discriminating and judging others based on physical or material appearance. Let us be still as we consciously draw near to our God and converse with the God of Creation who loves and cares for everyone.

♪ **Hymn/Song** (*ex. Through the darkness guiding Surely*)

### **Prayer**

God of the universe, all praise honour and glory be to you. You are an awesome God whose ways are unfathomable but always based on love for all. We beseech you to have mercy and forgive us for our proneness to wander away from you and live according to the dictates of our own minds and hearts. Cleanse us as we draw near to you and grant us the aid of your Holy Spirit so that this time of worship and reflection may be anointed with your presence and power. Hallowed be your name now and forever.

**Amen**

### **Scripture Reading**

#### **Revelation 7: 9-17**

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup>They cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb!” <sup>11</sup>And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup>singing, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” <sup>13</sup>Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?” <sup>14</sup>I said to him, “Sir, you are the one who knows.” Then he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. <sup>15</sup>For this reason they are before the throne of God and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. <sup>16</sup>They will hunger no more and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat, <sup>17</sup>for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

The Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

### **Reflection**

In his vision John saw a sight to behold. It was indeed “*out of this world*”. The gathering was peopled by humans from “*from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages*” it was an amazingly inclusive crowd and in unison they were declaring: “*Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb*”.



In this world, which is God's world and humans are all God's creation, we are beset by the spirit and attitudes of divisiveness and hatred. We judge and accept or reject each other based on appearances, accents, colour, languages, and nationalities. There are those who feel they are more than while regarding their fellow humans as less than. Generally, we feel we must have someone to look down on.

Such experiences and behaviours were never and will never be God's will and expectations for us. These are wrongs, ungodly, and unacceptable attitudes that God seeks to eradicate from our daily lives and world. Children of God should strive to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before God. In the eyes of God no one is better than another person. God will empower us so to do so that we will be numbered amongst those who are "*robed in white*".

John recalled having a vision of exactly how it should be. The massive inclusive crowd that gathered around God could not be counted. They included persons from *every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages*, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. This is not only how it will be in heaven that is how God wants it to be on earth. We must do all we can to begin to eradicate the evils of discrimination, xenophobia and racism while we are alive in this world. When we put Jesus at the core of our lives there is no division or separation because in Jesus there are not boundaries of language, race, gender, culture, social status, religion for in Christ we are all the one people of God.

## Prayers of Intercession

L. The peace of the Lord be with you!

R. **And also with you.**

L. God, Creator of human, who shows no partiality but loves everyone equally help us to follow your examples and love all your people regardless of race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, or denominational affiliation.

R. **God of us all have mercy, hear and heal us.**

L. O Lord Jesus Christ, break down the barriers which separate us from each other and from God. Teach us to love each other across the walls of colour, social class, creed, sexual orientation, and nationality. Grant us courage and love to resist prejudice and discrimination and lead us in the path of peace on earth. God of all peoples:

R. **Hear us and have mercy**

L. Inclusive God, who does not treat us according to our differences and preferences give us the mind that was in Christ Jesus that we will, in all our dealings, eradicate all forms and shades of discrimination, xenophobia and racism and live in love and peace with everyone. Help us to live in anticipation of the Great Day when your Reign comes on earth as it is in heaven. God of all peoples:

R. **Hear us and have mercy, it is in Jesus' name that we pray.**

Lord's Prayer *(possibly sung to the Caribbean tune)*

♪ Hymn/Song *(ex. We are one in the spirit we are one in the Lord)*



**Benediction**

**Go into the world and be confident that God is with you. Love and serve as children of God and God's blessings of peace, confidence generosity and hospitality accompany you now and forever. Amen**