

“The glory of God is the human person fully alive.”

Today we are invited to a life with God that opens us to all that is alive. It makes us celebrate life; it enables us to see the beauty of all that is created; it makes us desire to always be where life is.

God is community, a community built on love in all its forms. As we bless ourselves with the sign of the cross today, remember that we are symbolising that great mystery of God, that community of persons, the relationships of love that we are invited into, relationships of giving and receiving, relationships of community and life.



God is love and that God is a community built on love.

“Do not hesitate to love and to love deeply. You might be afraid of the pain that deep love can cause. When those you love deeply reject you, leave you, or die, your heart will be broken. But that should not hold you back from loving deeply. The pain that comes from deep love makes your love ever more fruitful. It is like a plow that breaks the ground to allow the seed to take root and grow into a strong plant. Every time you experience the pain of rejection, absence, or death, you are faced with a choice. You can become bitter and decide not to love again, or you can stand straight in your pain and let the soil on which you stand become richer and more able to give life to new seeds.

The more you have loved and have allowed yourself to suffer because of your love, the more you will be able to let your heart grow wider and deeper. When your love is truly giving and receiving, those whom you love will not leave your heart even when they depart from you. They will become part of yourself and thus gradually build a community within you.

Those you have deeply loved become part of you. The longer you live, there will always be more people to be loved by you and to become part of your inner community. The wider your inner community becomes, the more easily you will recognize your own brothers and sisters in the strangers around you. Those who are alive within you will recognize those who are alive around you. The wider the community of your heart, the wider the community around you. Thus the pain of rejection, absence, and death can become fruitful. Yes, as you love deeply the ground of your heart will be broken more and more, but you will rejoice in the abundance of the fruit it will bear. Dare to love and to be a real friend. The love you give and receive is a reality that will lead you closer and closer to God as well as those whom God has given you to love”ⁱ.

Forgiveness is the name of love practiced. We need to forgive and be forgiven every day, every hour increasingly. That is the great work of love among the fellowship of the weak that is the human family. But God assures us that He is always with us and let us remember that God sent Jesus to show us the way. Whatever pain of love we have experienced, Jesus has gone that path too. He knows our pain and our suffering and He will always be with us during those times even when we do not see or feel His presence.

There are many things in our world that we do not understand and there are darker forces out there that sometimes seem to dominate. But God's love will always be visible and wherever its presence or energy is, we have nothing to

fear. We are not in isolation but part of a community built on love in all its forms. Trinity may be surrounded in mystery but there is no mystery about the difference God's love makes in our lives

Reaching in to reach out

Reaching the inner person is one of the intrinsic strengths of all organised religions. Reaching in to reach out is a worthy mission and one that in terms of enduring values can appeal to the spirit of the age. It is a mission for which the Church as people of God is especially well placed.

We are comfortable living on the externals. We often go through the motions, do what needs to be done, tick all the boxes and just go with the flow of life. Sometimes we drift with the flow and take everything as it comes. We don't always look within us, to our own inner feelings, thoughts, hopes and dreams. Our inner voice sometimes screams to be heard. Every healthy and good religion allows us to connect with our inner selves. We do this through prayer, quiet time, reflection, meditation, silence or taking time out to just be.

Once we give ourselves a chance to reach within, we are in fact reaching to God and doing our best to understand that God is often our stepping stone in life. When we race through life, jumping from one moment to the next, we can often forget the stepping stones. We can only find them or use them, if we slow down and take it one step at a time. When was the last time you reached within yourself? Every time we reach in, we slow ourselves down enough, to give us a genuine chance of connecting with the energy or presence of God in our life.

A Creed to live by

Don't underestimate your worth by comparing yourself with others. It is because we are different that each of us is special.

Don't set your goals by what other people deem important. Only you know what is best for you.

Don't take for granted the things closest to your heart. Cling to them as you would for your life, for without them, life is meaningless.

Don't let your life slip through your fingers by living in the past or for the future. By living your life one day at a time, you will live all the days of your life.

Don't give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until you stop trying.

Don't be afraid to encounter risks. It is in taking chances that we learn how to be brave.

Don't shut love out of your life by saying it is impossible to find. The quickest way to receive love is to give love; the fastest way to lose love is to hold it too tightly; and the best way to keep love is to give it wings.

Don't dismiss your dreams; to be without dreams is to be without hope; to be without hope is to be without purpose.

Don't run through life so fast that you forget not only where you've been, but also where you are going.

Life is not a race, but a journey to be savoured every step of the way.

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

“The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted,

knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that

this enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen” *Oscar Romero*

(Also taken from Henri Nouwen “The Inner Voice of Love)

Pentecost Prayer Service of Hope



Opening Reflection

Leader: Pentecost is a time to celebrate hope, a hope evoked by the knowledge that God, through the Holy Spirit, is at work among us. It is a celebration of newness, of re-creation, of renewal of purpose, mission, and calling as God's people. It is a celebration of God's ongoing work in the world—the coming of God's kingdom. And it is also a recognition of our participation in God's work as the Holy Spirit is poured upon us.

Readings

Reader 1: On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As God has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20: 19-22)

Reader 2: Scripture tells us that the disciples had hidden themselves out of fear. Then, Jesus breathed on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit burned within them as fire. And those followers of Jesus—the same that had isolated themselves out of fear—were filled with hope and became a living movement to bring about another creation—the kingdom of God.

Reader 3: Our work for God especially in the areas of justice, mercy and compassion—our "yes" to sharing God's love, mercy and compassion – can sometimes leave us disappointed, discouraged, hopeless. We look around at the suffering and misery of our brothers and sisters around the world, and we wonder if our work is meaningless. Will we hide away from the world of hunger, poverty, prejudice, oppression and war?

Reader 4: Today we pray to God that the Holy Spirit fill our hearts, and that our lives be guided not by fear, but by dynamic hope. We ask that the fire of the Holy Spirit burn brightly within us as we work to create a more just, peaceful and compassionate world.

Reader 5: Hope is the voice that God uses to speak to our hearts. Hope is God's parachute in life and it is always God's smile. It is not a product, you can't buy it and it is always a part of a journey. In many ways hope is prayer. Without it you have nothing and with it you have so many possibilities. During difficult times we must have hope. We put our trust and hope in God to guide us through the unknown, to help us learn from mistakes and to use wisely the wisdom of those who have been there before.

Litany of the Holy Spirit

Each one is invited to read the first phrase of every line, and all participants respond "grant us hope."

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| Promise of God, grant us hope. | Spirit of counsel and fortitude, grant us hope. |
| Ray of light, grant us hope. | Spirit of knowledge and truth, grant us hope. |
| Author of all good, grant us hope. | Spirit of peace and reconciliation, grant us hope. |
| Source of life-giving water, grant us hope. | Spirit of transformation and renewal, grant us hope. |
| Consuming fire, grant us hope. | Spirit of justice and clemency, grant us hope. |
| Ardent love, grant us hope. | Holy Spirit, Comforter, grant us hope. |
| Spiritual balm, grant us hope. | Holy Spirit, Gift of God, grant us hope. |
| Spirit of love and compassion, grant us hope. | Holy Spirit Who fills the universe, grant us hope. Amen. |
| Spirit of wisdom and understanding, grant us hope. | |

Reader 6: Bearing faithful witness to God's justice and holiness will not be easy, but we must remember that we are not called to do it alone, for the Spirit who calls also says, "Lo, I am with you, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). Together, as a community with the Holy Spirit, let us reflect and pray for those who are struggling in the world. Let us look upon their challenges, their struggles, and their difficulties. We will also acknowledge and rejoice in the signs of hope that we find there.

Closing Prayer

Today we remember the first disciples as they received the Holy Spirit and were sent forth to continue the work of God. We are invited to recommit ourselves to welcoming God's Spirit, who abides in us, and to be very mindful that the fruits of the Spirit were not given solely for our personal benefit but rather are to be shared with the whole human family. Help us to work together for a more just, compassionate and peaceful world in which the dignity of all people is respected and we grow to be an inclusive community. Help us to increase our knowledge and call for a better world for those who are held back by poverty, oppression and injustice. And

help us to continue to search for signs of hope, that we might celebrate them and be inspired by them. O Holy Spirit, Grant us peace and joy. Amen

