

# THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2011

## Part 3 The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2011 Biblical reflections and prayers for the eight days

### Sunday 5 June The Church in Jerusalem

**Day 1** sets forth the background to the mother church of Jerusalem, making clear its continuity with the church throughout the world today. It reminds us of the courage of the early church as it boldly witnessed to the truth, just as we today need to work for justice in Jerusalem, and in the rest of the world.

#### Prayer

Almighty and Merciful God, with great power you gathered together the first Christians in the city of Jerusalem, though the gift of the Holy Spirit, defying the earthly power of the Roman Empire. Grant that, like this first church in Jerusalem, we may come together to be bold in preaching and living the good news of reconciliation and peace, wherever there is inequality and injustice. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who liberates us from the bondage of sin and death.

Amen.

*Joel 2: 2-21-22, 28-29 I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; Psalm 46 God is in the midst of the city; Acts 2: 1-12 When the day of Pentecost had come; John 14: 15-21 This is the spirit of truth*

### Monday 6 June Many Members in One Body

**Day 2** recalls that the first community united at Pentecost contained within itself many diverse origins, just as the church in Jerusalem today represents a rich diversity of Christian traditions. Our challenge today is to achieve greater visible unity in ways that embrace our differences and traditions.

#### Prayer

God, from whom all life flows in its rich diversity, you call your Church as the Body of Christ to be united in love. May we learn more deeply our unity in diversity, and strive to work together to preach, and build up the Kingdom of your abundant love to all, while accompanying each other in each place, and in all places. May we always be mindful of Christ as the source of our life together. We pray in the unity of the Spirit.

Amen

*Isaiah 55: 1-4 Come to the waters; Psalm 85: 8-13 Surely salvation is at hand; 1 Corinthians 12 : 12-27 For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body; John 15 : 1-13 I am the true vine.*

## **Tuesday 7 June Devotion to the Apostles' Teaching Unites Us**

**Day 3** looks at the first essential element of unity; the Word of God delivered through the teaching of the apostles. The church in Jerusalem reminds us that, whatever our divisions, these teachings urge us to devote ourselves in love to each other, and in faithfulness to the one body which is the church

### **Prayer**

God of Light, we give you thanks for the revelation of your truth in Jesus Christ, your Living Word, which we have received through the apostles' teaching, first heard at Jerusalem. May your Holy Spirit continue to sanctify us in the truth of your Son, so that united in Him we may grow in devotion to the Word, and together serve your Kingdom in humility and love. In Christ's name we pray.

Amen

*Isaiah 51: 4-8 Listen to me, my people; Psalm 119 :105-112 Your word is a lamp to my feet; Romans 1: 15-17 Eagerness to proclaim the gospel; John 17 : 6-19 I have made your name known*

## **Wednesday 8 June Sharing, an Expression of Our Unity**

**Day 4** emphasises Sharing as the second expression of unity. Just as the early Christians held all things in common, the Church in Jerusalem calls upon all brothers and sisters in the church to share goods and burdens with glad and generous hearts, so that nobody stays in need.

### **Prayer**

God of Justice, your giving is without bounds. We thank you that you have given what we need, so that all may be fed, clothed and housed. Guard us from the selfish sin of hoarding, and inspire us to be instruments of love, sharing all that you give us, as a witness to your generosity and justice. As followers of Christ, lead us to act together in places of want: where families are driven from their homes, where the vulnerable suffer at the hands of the powerful, where poverty and unemployment destroy lives. We pray in the name of Jesus, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Isaiah 58: 6-10 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry; Psalm 37 : 1-11 Trust in the Lord and do good; Acts 4: 32-37 Everything they owned was held in common; Matthew 6: 25-34 Strive first for the kingdom of God*

## **Thursday 9 June Breaking the Bread in Hope**

**Day 5** expresses the third element of unity; the Breaking of the Bread, which joins us in hope. Our unity goes beyond Holy Communion; it must include a right attitude towards ethical living, the human person and the whole community. The Jerusalem church urges Christians to unite in the breaking of bread today, because a divided church cannot speak out with authority on issues of Justice and Peace.

## **Prayer**

God of Hope, we praise you for your gift to us of the Lord's Supper, where, in the Spirit, we continue to meet your Son Jesus Christ, the living bread from heaven. Forgive our unworthiness of this great gift of our living in factions, our collusion with inequalities, our complacency in separation. Lord, we pray that you will hasten the day when your whole church together shares the breaking of the bread, and that, as we wait for that day, we may learn more deeply to be a people formed by the Eucharist for service to the world. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Exodus 16: 15b-21a It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat; Psalm 116 : 12-14, 16-18 I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice; 1 Corinthians 11: 17-18, 23-26 Do this in remembrance of me; John 6: 53-58 This is the bread that came down from heaven...*

## **Friday 10 June Empowered to Action in Prayer**

**Day 6** presents the fourth mark of unity; with the church in Jerusalem, we draw strength from spending time in prayer. Specifically, the Lord's Prayer calls all of us in Jerusalem and throughout the world, the weak and the mighty, to work together for justice, peace and unity that God's Kingdom may come

## **Prayer**

Lord God our Father, we rejoice that in all times, places and cultures, there are people who reach out to you in prayer. Above all we thank you for the example and teaching of your Son, Jesus Christ, who has taught us to long in prayer for the coming of your Kingdom. Teach us to pray better as Christians together, so that we may always be aware of your guidance and encouragement through all our joys and distress, through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Jonah 2: 1-9 Deliverance belongs to the Lord!; Psalm 67: 1-7 Let the peoples praise you, O God!; 1 Timothy 2: 1-8 ... prayers should be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions ...; Matthew 6: 5-15 Your kingdom come, your will be done ...*

## **Saturday 11 June Living in Resurrection Faith**

**Day 7** takes us beyond the four elements of unity, as the Jerusalem church joyfully proclaims the Resurrection even while it bears the pain of the Cross. The Resurrection of Jesus is for Christians in Jerusalem today hope and strength that enables them to remain constant in their witness, working for freedom and peace in the City of Peace

## **Prayer**

God, Protector of the widow, the orphan and the stranger of in a world where many know despair, you raised your Son Jesus to give hope for humanity and renewal to the earth. Continue to strengthen and unify your Church in its struggles against the forces of death in the world, where violence against creation and humanity obscures the hope of the new life you offer. This we pray in the name of the Risen Lord, in the power of His Spirit. Amen.

*Isaiah 60: 1-3, 18-22 You shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates, Praise; Psalm 118 :1, 5-17 I shall not die, but I shall live; Roman 6: 4 ... we have been buried with Christ by baptism into death ... s we too might walk in newness of life; Matthew 28 : 1-10 Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid ...'*

## **Sunday 12 June Called for the Service of Reconciliation**

**Day 8** concludes the journey with a call from the Jerusalem churches to the wider service of reconciliation. Even if Christians achieve unity among themselves, their work is not done, for they need to reconcile themselves with others. In the Jerusalem context this means Palestinian and Israeli; in other communities, Christians are challenged to seek justice and reconciliation in their own context.

### **Prayer**

God of Peace, we thank you that you sent your Son Jesus, so that we might be reconciled to yourself in Him. Give us the grace to be effective servants of reconciliation within our churches. In this way help us to serve the reconciliation of all peoples, particularly in your Holy Land ó the place where you demolish the wall of separation between peoples, and unite everyone in the Body of Jesus, sacrificed on Mount Calvary. Fill us with love for one another, may our unity serve the reconciliation that you desire for all creation. We pray in the power of the Spirit. Amen.

*Genesis 33: 1-4 Esau ran to meet Jacob, and embraced him ... and they wept; Psalm 96 1-13 Say among the nations, 'The Lord is King!'; 2Corinthians 5: 17-21 God ... reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has give us the ministry of reconciliation; Matthew 5: 21-26 Leave your gift before the altar, and go: first be reconciled to your brother or sister ...*

The theme of each day has therefore been chosen not only to recall for us of the history of the early church, but also to bring to mind the experiences of Christians in Jerusalem today, and to invite us all to reflect upon how we may bring that experience into the lives of our local Christian communities. During this journey of eight days, the Christians of Jerusalem invite us to proclaim and bear witness that Unity - in its fullest sense of faithfulness to the Apostles' teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers - will enable us together to overcome evil, not just in Jerusalem, but throughout the world.