



God's Spirit on the city

Day 1

[17 May]

With Mary... find God within us

If Lent is the time to ask for help and Easter is the moment when our prayers are answered, to prepare for Pentecost is to strive to recognise this answer in our own lives.

Lent purified our desires and awakened the truest prayer of our hearts. And Easter has answered the deepest prayer of our hearts: the desire for true Life. Now, we are here engaged in a work of recognition (John 14:17), striving to welcome this answer truly and personally. In other words, we are here preparing to receive Him who abides with us, the Holy Spirit, the Living Spirit of the Risen Christ.

And how can we carry out this work?

“Whoever loves me” will recognize that the Father and I are living in him and for him. Whoever loves me – with agape ... agape? Even Peter recognized that he wasn't capable of this kind of love (John 21:15-19). Whoever loves me with agape “will keep my Word,” and the Spirit who is the shared Life of the Father and the Son will overshadow him.

That was the beginning of the story for Mary of Nazareth!

This could be the beginning of our story too!

Because agape, the love that is in God, wasn't it given to us – as it was to Mary – by the Resurrection of Christ? Yes! It's for us to receive it with an open heart!

This love opens our eyes (John 14:17) to the Word of answer that dwells in us. This love makes us able to see daily, in the city and within us, the presence of God.

What, then, is our work in preparation for Pentecost?

Like Mary, “let us welcome with our entire being the love that God brings to us first” and we will receive the Holy Spirit! (Jerusalem Community Rule of Life, #1-3).

THE WORD AS THE WAY

John 14:15-18, 23-26 (© NRSVCE)

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. (...) Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me. I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

WORDS TO PRAY

On this path that leads to you, O Father, send your Holy Spirit to dance within us so that your Word, present in our hearts, will summon us and guide our destinies.

At the daybreak of this retreat, please liberate us from everything that blocks our way and prevents us from recognizing your presence within us.

Come, Holy Spirit, unify us by your breath, so that together we can follow you and serve you in peace.

Grant us new life and the ability to radiate, every day, our joy to be called children of God.



God's Spirit on the city

Day 2

[18 May]

With Mary... leap for joy

Be attentive!

A transformation is coming...

God lives in us.

From now on, he wants to dance in us.

Dance in us to make our "today" smile.

We leap for joy, because we have received an important visitor: it's the arrival of the Spirit.

It's the Spirit who is preparing to arrive; it's the Spirit who prepares us.

His breath fills the sails of our hearts with a dynamic peace, an uplifting joy, a happiness that sends us out on mission. We are inhabited, like Mary inhabited by the Word. We are sent out, carriers of the Good News sown in our souls. She sows in us this Good News, in order – through us – to bring the fruit of blessing to the world.

Be attentive, because germination is patient, subtle – a sweet and gentle inner growth. Presence to the hidden Presence. Attentive listening to the interior Word. It's a matter of learning the steps to the tango the Spirit is dancing in our hearts.

What does the Spirit ask of us?

For what kind of joy is he preparing us?

Towards whom, interiorly, is he directing our love?

Come Holy Spirit, enlighten us. Come Holy Spirit, teach us. Come Spirit of the gift, Spirit of Jesus Resurrected. Come and dance in us. So, at the heart of the world where you have placed us, we will be spokespeople of your joy, we will be missionaries with a contagious happiness, with a generosity that can heal all suffering.

THE WORD AS THE WAY

Zeph 3:14-18a (© NRSVCE)

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,

O daughter Jerusalem!

The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more.

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion;

do not let your hands grow weak.

The Lord, your God, is in your midst,

a warrior who gives victory;

he will rejoice over you with gladness,

he will renew you in his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival.

WORDS TO PRAY

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the Holy Spirit who makes love and joy bubble up within us.

Yes, Holy Spirit, you live in our hearts. You give us the ability to partake in, and to wonder at, the immensity of your love.

O how we adore you! Without you, sadness, emptiness, nothingness and death invade us.

Holy Spirit, empty us of ourselves, liberate us from our daily acts of death, remove self-sufficiency from our hearts, chase away our shadows, so that our hearts will overflow with light and our souls rediscover true joy: the joy to taste the intensity of your love.



God's Spirit on the city

Day 3

[19 May]

With Mary... quench our thirst

From the open side of the sacrificial Lamb, from the right side of the new Temple, water has poured. In the beginning it was a small trickle. But instead of drying upon contact with the earth – Oh, surprise! – this trickle of water soon grew to become a spring, a ravine, a stream, and even a river...

On the banks of this river, we have walked and we have seen in the heart of the waters a profusion of fish, full of life. And on the shore, trees with green foliage bore fruit in abundance. Everything that the waters of this river managed to penetrate was as if washed, purified, revived.

What good news is given to us here?

In the dead waters of our hearts, mud can be replaced by sanctity. Abundant sin can be replaced by superabundant grace.

When it touches the waters of the river of Life, death perishes.

Could we allow this river to flow through our hearts?

Then, like a tree planted at the side of the river, we will bear fruit in abundance, fruits of grace, good to eat and to share: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22). "As a deer longs for flowing streams" our hearts are thirsty for this water (Ps. 42:2). "If you knew the gift of God... you who would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." (John 4:10)

Come Holy Spirit, to quench our thirst and to make – in us and from us – streams of living water flow.

THE WORD AS THE WAY

Ezek 47:1-2, 8-9, 12 (© NRSVCE)

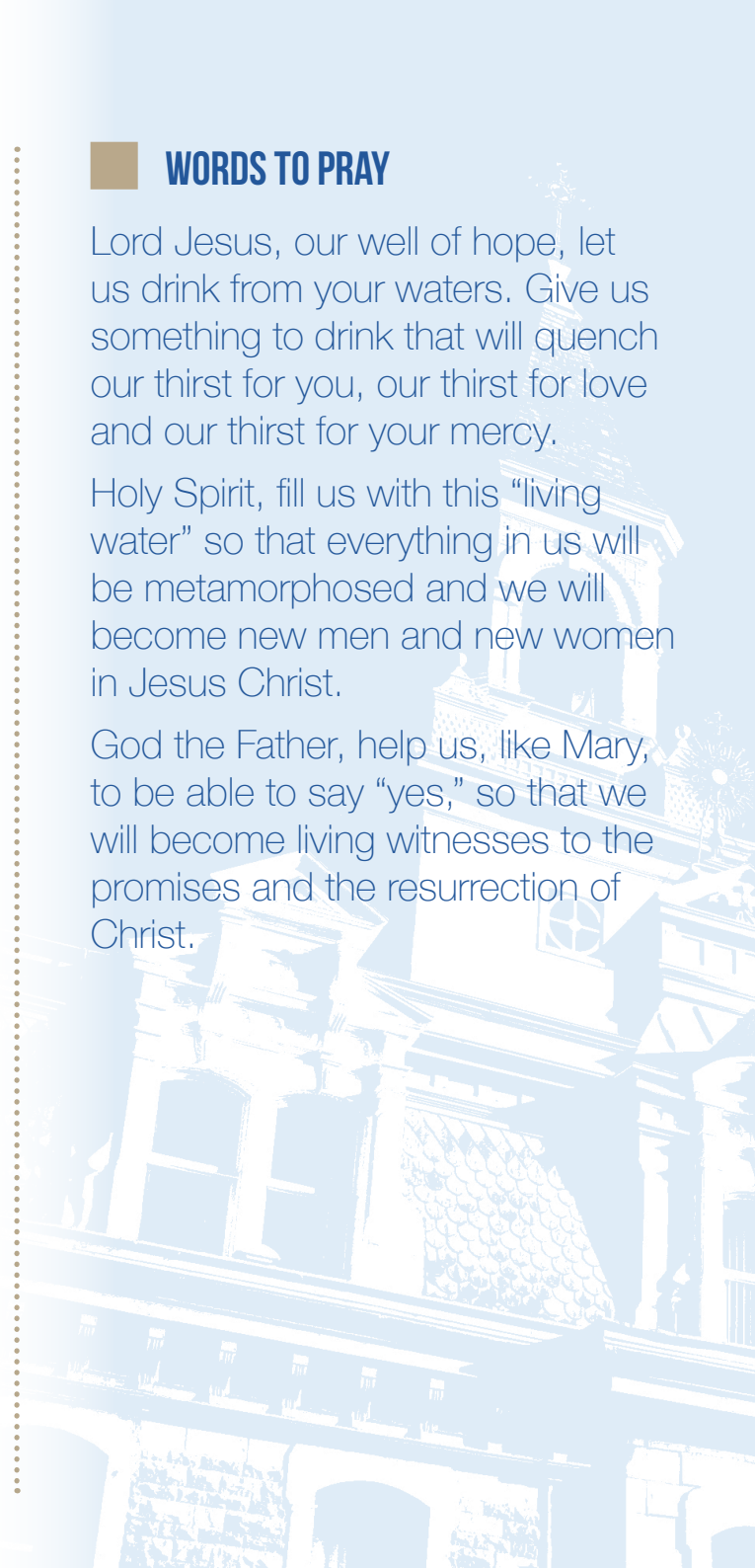
Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there, water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. Then he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east; and the water was coming out on the south side. (...) He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh. Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes. (...) On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing."

WORDS TO PRAY

Lord Jesus, our well of hope, let us drink from your waters. Give us something to drink that will quench our thirst for you, our thirst for love and our thirst for your mercy.

Holy Spirit, fill us with this "living water" so that everything in us will be metamorphosed and we will become new men and new women in Jesus Christ.

God the Father, help us, like Mary, to be able to say "yes," so that we will become living witnesses to the promises and the resurrection of Christ.





God's Spirit on the city

Day 4

[20 May]

At Mary's side... on the path of liberation

All of us find ourselves shouting "victory" in our own way, with more or less intensity and conviction. Whether small or great, victories appear in our lives on the path of liberation, if we dare to advance by putting forward one foot, and then another. These are also privileged moments in which we recognize the eruption of God's presence into our lives.

The joy of liberation!

My soul magnifies the Lord!

We encounter these moments of liberation often in the experience of our poverty: sickness, suffering, mourning, disappointment, exhaustion, solitude. In spite of the apparent strength of these tests, we can find within us the presence of God's spirit. She is not only the inspiration, but also the power to advance beyond our limitations, to surmount our spiritual combats.

At a detour in our path, convergence can occur. If we are flexible enough and paying attention, we can let God be God for us. An effusion of the Holy

Spirit then rises up within us. The weaknesses and the poverties of our human condition are thus transformed by the presence of the Spirit. Like Mary, we can thus proclaim our liberation and our joy: my soul magnifies the Lord! A door is thus opened.

Mary is the model of a totally free human being. Free to welcome Christ. Following her example, let's prepare for Pentecost in true liberty, in order to become increasingly apt to recognize and to taste the action of God who accompanies us in our daily lives. Let us seek, therefore, true liberty in Christ in order to proclaim with joy all the days of our lives: my soul magnifies the Lord!

THE WORD AS THE WAY

Lk 1:46-55 (© NRSVCE)

And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

WORDS TO PRAY

Holy Spirit, be praised for your salvific presence. You gently transform our lives and make the joy of the Beatitudes break out in us. It's in your eyes that the small, the poor, the voiceless, the humble, the unhappy, and the thirsty, find their true value. O how we adore you!

Holy Spirit, keep us well-disposed and open to God's action within us. You who know our limits, our doubts, our fragility – you who know how our spirits are too often stained with pride, jealousy, vanity and greed – liberate us, so that beside Mary, we can transcend our powerlessness. Sustain us so that we may count on you and, with your grace, journey toward true freedom.



Day 5

[21 May]

Drawing near to Mary... find consolation

A little child plays tranquilly on the floor at Mass. He gets up and violently bonks his head on the pew. His cry of pain rips through the silence of the church and pierces the hearts of the faithful, affecting them deeply. His mother leans over and takes him into her arms. Consolation for the little one and for the assembly. Like the child in his mother's arms, let us be cradled by the Pentecost hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*. May the Consoler, the Holy Spirit, with calming and enlivening refreshment, come wipe our tears and give us rest in the midst of our pain.

God wants to give us his Holy Spirit to console us. He is the Paraclete, the Protector who reminds us of God's words, the Promise that restores our hope for a new day when death and all of its footprints – tears, pain, cries – will be destroyed. He is also the hope for a new earth, new horizons when our life seems pointless. The Holy Spirit consoles us, here and now, because he has established his tent in the midst of us. He dwells with us.

And yet, it is so difficult for us to let ourselves be consoled. We prefer to be adults: "No, everything's fine, I don't need someone else to pick me up when I fall down..." We stifle our cries, we hide our tears, we bury our fears.

Will we let Mary lean down and take us into her arms like a mother cradles her little child? Will we dare to be little children before God? Let's tell Him our sufferings, stop hiding our tears from Him. This Pentecost, could we give Him the chance to wipe the tears from our eyes and to be our God? Could we let ourselves be consoled?

THE WORD AS THE WAY

Rev 21:1-4 (© NRSVCE)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

WORDS TO PRAY

Lord, we believe in your love and in your word and we want to give you our sufferings and our tears.

Aware of the Christ's ardent desire to save us, dispose us to surrender ourselves to the Father's love and to stay attentive to your word: Blessed are the afflicted, because they will be consoled. Help us allow ourselves to be consumed by the fire of your Spirit.

Next to Mary and in her presence, teach us to turn at all times toward your Son in trust and abandonment, so that we will find true consolation in you.



God's Spirit on the city

Day 6

[22 May]

Drawing near to Mary... stay watchful

"Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife" said the angel to Joseph. Today, it's to us the angel calls, so that the Spirit may come on this eve of Pentecost. To "be without fear" is characteristic of Love.

Take Mary as your wife ...

It's to open space within oneself so that the Holy Spirit will teach us all things.

It's to welcome the Spirit, guided by one who is full of grace.

It's to let the way mark itself out so that the Holy Spirit can lead us to Jesus Christ.

It's to choose the path of fecundity, in the Spirit of the living God.

It's to create space within ourselves so that Jesus Christ will come, and come again, in us.

Where Christ is, there is Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Church.

Where the Spirit is, God is at work.

"Here is your Mother!"

Let's not be afraid to receive her.

Let's stay watchful so that we can welcome.

Welcome the will of God.

Welcome the gift of Christ on the cross, giving the ultimate gift of his life.

Welcome the gift of grace in the fullness of the Spirit.

Welcome into oneself and welcome into the Church the call to Sanctity

THE WORD AS THE WAY

Mt 1:18-25 (© NRSVCE)

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

WORDS TO PRAY

Be glorified, Holy Spirit, because your arrival at Pentecost is the celebration of life. Pentecost bring us the comfort of your love, nurtures our joy and revives our trust in you.

Bless you, because you deliver us from our fears and anxieties. You come to espouse the poverty of our hearts and to guide us along the path of freedom. Too often prisoners of fear and paralyzed by anxiety, help us to dwell in hope, our souls yearning for you, so that we may be fruitful witnesses of your love.

Grant us, O Father, trust and self-abandonment, so that we can launch ourselves into your arms and your infinite mercy. Put on our lips the name that belongs to you alone: Abba.



God's Spirit on the city

Day 7

[23 May]

Through the example of Mary... Learn to be part of the Body of the Church

What joy to hear this psalm sing of God's love for His people, for this city of God where people of every tribe, language, people and nation live united – the Church! God longs to bring us together into one family, united as children of the same Father. United in his Church, our mother, who gives us life, nourishes us, and sustains us through her sacraments.

What a family!

What diversity!

We come from everywhere, all of the continents, all conditions, and all sorts of different cultures. But that's exactly what Jesus wants: that we all be one, in God, through his Body that is the Church, by the breath of the Holy Spirit.

And for that, Jesus has given to all of us, his beloved disciples, his own mother, at the foot of the cross. Mary is our mother like the Church is our mother, to give us life that comes from God, to draw us together around her Son. Let's welcome, with

St. John, the gift of Mary, so that she will teach us how to let ourselves be unified by the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit, Spirit of the Father and of the Son, be in us the seed of the unity that is at the heart of the Trinity, so that we may form, with our brothers and sisters throughout the world, one body, the Body of Christ.

THE WORD AS THE WAY

Psalm 87 (© NRSVCE)

On the holy mount stands the city he founded;

*the LORD loves the gates of Zion
more than all the dwellings of Jacob.*

Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God.

*Among those who know me
I mention Rahab and Babylon;*

Philistia too, and Tyre, with Ethiopia –

"This one was born there," they say.

And of Zion it shall be said,

"This one and that one were born in it";

for the Most High himself will establish it.

The LORD records, as he registers the peoples,

"This one was born there."

Singers and dancers alike say,

"All my springs are in you."

WORDS TO PRAY

Lord, by your Cross you wanted to save us and make us all part of one body, your Church. Help us to stay faithful to your teachings and to proclaim, together, the Good News to all the people of the world.

O Holy Spirit, breathe in us the spirit of unity, so that with all our brothers and sisters, we will share the fruits of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With Mary, mother of the Church, teach us to live in communion with our brothers and sisters and may we remain ever fervent and full of hope amongst the people with whom we share our days.



God's Spirit on the city

Day 8

[24 May]

Accompanied by Mary... accept to go out on mission

On the day of the Annunciation, Mary, you meditated on the Word of the angel; on the day of the Visitation, you lifted up your voice in a song of thanksgiving; on the day of the Nativity, an adoring silence overtook your heart; at the foot of the Cross, lamentations and tears ripped apart your soul... But it's in the silence of the dawn that you rejoiced with the Risen Jesus.

Today, you sit in the midst of the Church and you sing the praises of the Lord, Daughter of Zion, because here he announces: "I will come! I will dwell in your midst: yes, I will dwell among you."

The Lord becomes flames of fire that burn up our hearts: by his grace, we become temples illuminated by the fire of the Spirit. And you, Mary, it's in the silence of the Cenacle, praying with one heart with the apostles, that you receive the anointing of his Love.

"O fire, of which the coming is the Word,
Of which the silence is light,

Fire that establishes our hearts
in thanksgiving!" (St. Ephrem)

With Mary, Mother of the Church, we ask You, Lord, to make this song of thanksgiving spring forth from our hearts so that we can joyfully share the fire of the Spirit with our brothers. Missionaries of your Spirit, with Mary, Our Lady of Pentecost, we may burn to become one Church with the world around us.

THE WORD AS THE WAY

Zech 2,10-13 (© NRSVCE)

Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For lo, I will come and dwell in your midst, says the LORD. Many nations shall join themselves to the LORD on that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in your midst. And you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. The LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem. Be silent, all people, before the LORD; for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.

WORDS TO PRAY

Thank you God, our Father, for the breath of the Spirit that comes to dwell in us on this day of Pentecost.

Thank you for the gifts of wisdom, intelligence, counsel, power, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord that enliven us.

Inhabited by your presence, stay with us, so that in the city, in our communities, in our families as well as in our places of work we can be signs and witnesses of your Gospel. Accompanied by Mary, we may find always the strength and the courage to go ahead in the missions to which you call us.