

Nine Days of Prayer for the Seven-Fold Gifts of the Holy Spirit

May 9 – May 18, 2024



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*A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.*
Isaiah 11:1-2

Introduction

Jesus told his disciples that after he ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit would come upon them to give them the gifts they needed to bear witness to the Gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:6-8) These gifts have been associated with the seven-fold gifts listed by the prophet Isaiah in his description of the coming messiah.

As the story of Acts unfolds, the disciples gathered in the upper room to pray each day after the Ascension until when they received the promised gifts on Pentecost ten day later. From then, the story of the faithful becomes the story of witnessing to the transforming love of Christ in ways that carried the Good News from Jerusalem to Rome and the ends of the earth.

We who have been baptized into Christ's body, have received these same gifts for the same purpose – to be Christ's hands and heart in the world today. This devotion unites us with the disciples in their prayer in a format known as a novena – a period of focused prayer for a specific purpose.

How to use this Devotion

The daily prayers in this booklet follow the format of Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families in our *Book of Common Prayer*. Each day begins with an opening psalm, a passage of Scripture related to that day's theme, a reflection on the spiritual gift, and concluding prayers. All texts are from Scripture, the Prayer Book, a popular Episcopal devotional *St. Augustine's Prayer Book*, and the

Church of England's supplements for Ascensiontide in *Times and Seasons*. These prayers can be offered any time of day, individually or with others, and takes as little as five minutes. The blank pages at the back can be used for notes or as a brief prayer journal.

The novena is designed to augment other prayer practices individuals may already follow, or to help those new to daily prayer have a focused experience that can be an opportunity for further growth.

We invite you to join with us as a congregation beginning on Day May 9th, the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord with Day One. We will also have a festive celebration of the Holy Eucharist at 7:30 pm on May 9th, which will be live-streamed if you cannot join us in person.

The novena continues through Day Nine on May 18th. We then will gather, as the first disciples did, on Pentecost to celebrate the Holy Spirit's work in our lives and conclude the Easter season. The light of Christ burning before us in the Paschal Candle will now burn within us as we go in peace to love and serve the Lord in our community.

The Holy Spirit has been on the move at St. Peter's. Where will God take us next? Let us pray together and see!

*Come, Holy Ghost,
our souls inspire,
and lighten with celestial fire.
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.*

*Thy blessed unction from above
is comfort, life, and fire of love.
Enable with perpetual light
the dullness of our blinded sight.*

*Anoint and cheer our soiled face
with the abundance of thy grace.*

*Keep far from foes,
give peace at home:
where thou art guide, no ill can come.*

*Teach us to know the
Father, Son,
and thee, of both, to be
but One,*

*that through the ages all along,
this may be our endless song:
praise to thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

Veni Creator Spiritus (Come, creator Spirit), 9th Century.

The Ordinary of the Novena

Opening Psalm

The devotion begins with one of these invocations.

You send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and we are created; *
and so you renew the face of the earth.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of thy faithful people: *
and kindle in us the fire of thy love.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

or

Open my lips, O Lord, *
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.

Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Scripture

A person reads the passage of Scripture appointed for the day from the following pages.

Reflection

A reflection on the day's Gift is offered, either from the day's reading or from the officiant, a participant, or other devotional on the Seven-Fold Gifts.

The Prayers

The prayer appointed for the day.

The Lord's Prayer.

Time for free prayer for the strengthening of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in ourselves, our congregation, and those we carry in our hearts.

Conclusion

The Devotion concludes as follows

V. Be with us, Spirit of God;

R. nothing can separate us from your love.

V. Breathe on us, breath of God;

R. fill us with your saving power.

V. Speak in us, wisdom of God;

R. bring strength, healing, and peace.

Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Romans 15:13

Day One:

A new birth in the Holy Spirit

Scripture

Nicodemus said to [Jesus], ‘How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, “You must be born from above.” The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’ *John 3:4-8*

Reflection

All Christians are born again, even though it is not language Episcopalians often use. Our second birth happens at baptism when we are buried with Christ in his crucifixion and raised with Christ in his resurrection. The waters of baptism recall the beginning of creation when “a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:2) The wind is God’s spirit, God’s breath, and it is given to us in baptism, giving us a second birth, the birth from above. The final verse of the Christmas hymn “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” anticipates Easter, putting it this way, “Mild he lays his Glory by, Born that we no more may die; Born to raise us from the Earth, born to give us second Birth.”

Life in Christ is about new beginnings. With God, we are always being made new. As we begin these days of prayer on the journey to Pentecost, where do we seek new beginnings in our lives? Where is God at work moving St. Peter’s to new life? For whom can we pray in our lives who long for new beginnings, do-overs, or a deeper life with the God in whose image they are made? The Spirit blows where it wills. We do not need to hold back our prayers out of fear or skepticism. As the disciples gathered in prayer, so do we. As the Spirit descended on Pentecost, so it is at work in us now. Where is it taking us next?

Prayer

O HOLY SPIRIT, as you moved on the face of the waters in the beginning of creation, so quicken us to new life; as you inspired the prophets and gave them insight and eloquence, so flood our imagination with your light; as you rested upon the Only-Begotten at his baptism in the River Jordan, so stir up in us the gifts given in baptism. As you poured out gifts and enlivened the Church on the first Pentecost, so fill us with your light and truth, that we may live and speak the gospel. Come, indwelling Spirit, and heal the lurking distemper of our hearts, infuse us with your grace. ***Amen.***

St. Augustine's Prayer Book, Prayers to the Holy Spirit

Day Two:

The gift of Wisdom

Scripture

If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace. *James 1:5, 3:13-18*

Reflection

Wisdom, in Christian tradition, is the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit. Human wisdom is knowledge gained from experience and age. The Spirit's gift turns us in a Godward-focus. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, a twelfth century mystic, taught that the spiritual gift of wisdom both illumines the mind and builds in us an attraction to God. It is for both the mind and the heart. Wisdom is the perspective of seeing as God sees, revealed to us in the life of Jesus.

Wisdom can also come from surprising places. Saint Benedict in his rule for community life (fifth century) admonishes the abbot to always seek out the voice of the newest and youngest members of the monastery when seeking counsel. God speaks through them as well, and their perspective and fresh sight can open our minds to see things in new and inspiring ways.

May the Spirit of Wisdom open our minds and hearts to the presence of God in renewing us, our congregation, and this world.

Prayer

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. ***Amen.***

Prayer for Guidance, BCP p, 832

Day Three: **The gift of Understanding**

Scripture

In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. . . For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Colossians 1:3-4, 9-12

Reflection

Does understanding mean that we have it all worked out? Not likely! It has been said that the more we know, the more we know we do not know!

We are part of a tradition that speaks of the “mysteries of faith,” such as the Trinity, salvation, resurrection, incarnation, the Eucharist, and so forth. Mysteries, in spiritual language, are things that are never understood fully, that always leave room to discover more. Like a great piece of art, we can describe it, but each time we look at it, we see something new. There is always more to learn.

Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century) was known as one of the smartest teachers of the faith to have ever lived. Yet, on his death bed he had a vision of the glory of heaven, which led him to utter, “All that I have written is but straw before the fire.”

Saint Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13:12), “Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” Our understanding is rooted in God’s ceaseless love for us, even though God fully knows us, our foibles as well as possibilities. Out of such understanding comes a passion to learn more and a strength to endure because God is the ultimate all-in-all.

We should never let the fear of not understanding hold us back, nor should we ever assume that we have it all figured out. Instead, we explore with our hearts and minds, and act to the glory of God based on what we understand now, trusting that God will make up for the rest and draw us ever closer to the fullness of truth.

Prayer

Holy Wisdom, in your loving kindness you created and restored us when we were lost: inspire us with your truth, that we may love you with our whole minds and run to you with open hearts, through Christ our Savior. ***Amen.***

Saint Alcuin of York, Mass of Wisdom

Day Four: **The gift of Counsel**

Scripture

Jesus continued, ‘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 for ever. 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. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.’ *John 14:15-21*

Reflection

Each of the gifts build on the previous gifts. Wisdom leads to understanding. Understanding leads to counsel. Counsel will lead to Fortitude and Courage. Counsel, as a spiritual gift, is both the capacity for discernment as well as the recognition that we are given a community in which we can “take counsel” together. The fundamental message of these days between Ascension and Pentecost is that we are not left alone. As Jesus ascends into heaven, the Holy Spirit descends into us to bind us to Christ and each other as the baptized people of God.

With the gift of counsel we are given the tools for discerning how God is at work and our place in that work, as individuals and in our congregation. It is the gift of perspective and, again, seeing from God’s perspective.

And, when we are uncertain or confused, it is the gift of a community to help us figure it out together. Counsel turns us outward to offer our perspective to others, as well as to take in the wisdom shared by others with us.

Prayer

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom all our intercessions are acceptable through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. ***Amen.***

Collect 8 after the Prayer of the People, BCP, p. 395

Day Five: **The gift of Fortitude (or Courage/Endurance)**

Scripture

You, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, 'You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off'; do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. *Isaiah 41:8-10*

Reflection

The traditional understanding of the gift is fortitude is the ability to stand fast in the face of persecution and trial.

We do not face persecution or martyrdom, but we do experience many pressures in our culture seeking to draw us away from an active life of faith. We encounter these forces in the form of time demands, divisive rhetoric, supremacist morality based on the self or one's group, and also in lethargy, and a reductionism of a Cross- and Easter-centered discipleship to a therapeutic moral deism that blesses as is without also calling to a higher purpose.

Fortitude can be understood as the courage of one's convictions, the ability to endure in the midst of challenges, or the commitment to put Christ-like love first in all that we do. It can also be a resiliency in which we have the capacity to move from anxiety to hope, and adapt to changing circumstances rather than fearing change and struggling to return to the "good old days."

The gift of fortitude can even be exercised in those moments when we feel dry, empty, or abandoned by God and yet somehow keep at it in our worship, prayers, church connections, and service to others. "God, where are you?! You seem to be absent, but I am going to trust that you are here," is a frequent them in the psalms. We have hope that God will give us an oasis in our spiritual desert that will awaken our faith once again.

At the end of the day, fortitude is the ability to trust that God will be faithful to God's promises. The Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude helps us to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

Prayer

Grant us, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. ***Amen.***

Collect for Proper 21, BCP, p. 234

Day Six: The gift of Knowledge

Scripture

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

John 10:11-16

Reflection

Gregory of Nyssa (fourth century) concluded his *Life of Moses* with these words, “To be known by God, and to become God’s friend, this is true perfection.”

We most often speak of knowledge as intellectual understanding. The spiritual gift of knowledge is the gift of relationship – friendship – with the one who is the source of our being and our destiny at the end of time. It is an intimacy that goes beyond the mind and includes the heart and the soul.

The author of Exodus says that Moses would commune with God as one would with a friend. Jesus said on the night of his arrest, “I do not call you servants any longer, I call you friends. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” Jesus’ friendship is demonstrated in his love for us extended from the wood of the Cross.

The gift of Knowledge is the knowledge that we are known by God and are invited to know God with the fullness of our being, and the grace to grow in that friendship.

Prayer

O God of peace, who hast taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of thy Spirit lift us, we pray thee, to thy presence, where we may be still and know that thou art God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. ***Amen.***

Prayer for Quiet Confidence, BCP, p. 832

Day Seven: **The gift of Godliness/Piety**

Scripture

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2:43-47

Reflection

The prophet Isaiah lists “the fear of the Lord” twice in the list of the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit. Tradition has separated them into a holy awe associated with how we practice our faith (today’s gift) and a deeper awareness of the majesty of God as creator, ruler, judge, source of mercy, and redeemer (tomorrow’s gift).

Today’s reading from Acts describes the life of Christians just after receiving the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. It is also the source of our first baptismal promise to “continue in the apostle’s teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and the prayers.” Piety is the set of tools in our “faith practices” toolbox that help us grow in friendship with God and with God’s people.

We read scripture. We gather with the faithful for worship centered on the Eucharist where Christ comes to us again and again. We pray for others, we give thanks, we confess. And, we work for the well-being of our communities. All of these are acts of piety through which the Holy Spirit guides us, strengthens us, and uses us to be Christ’s healing hands and heart in the world around us.

Prayer

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. ***Amen.***

Collect for Proper 9, BCP., p. 230

Day Eight: The gift of the Fear of the Lord (Reverence)

Scripture

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; *
those who act accordingly have a good understanding;
their praise endures for ever
Psalm 111:10

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Romans 8:12-17

Reflection

One of our most popular hymns at the Eucharist begins with this verse:

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly-minded,
For with blessing in His hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
Our full homage to demand.*

This hymn dates to the sixth century in Jerusalem and is sung in place of the *Sanctus* (Holy, holy, holy. . .) at some Orthodox liturgies.

Reverence is another translation for “fear of the Lord.” As Paul writes, we are not children of God to dwell in fear of God, but rather to celebrate the boundless love of God that adopts us as the beloved of God and makes us siblings with Christ and therefore co-heirs of God’s realm. Our destiny is not dust but glory.

As our final gift, we are taken from the waters of baptism, through the practice of our life, and into the glorious court around the heavenly throne. We are in reverence and awe before the majesty that knows us each by name, embraces us, heals, empowers us, and brings us home.

With this gift, we do not tremble and hide, but rejoice in God’s embrace, adding our voices with the saints and heavenly beings as they sing:

*At His feet the six-winged seraph,
Cherubim with sleepless eye,
Veil their faces to the presence,
As with ceaseless voice they cry:
"Alleluia, Alleluia
Alleluia, Lord Most High!"*

Prayer

Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. ***Amen.***

Collect for Guidance, BCP, p. 100

Day Nine: A new Heart and a new Spirit

Scripture

I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Ezekiel 36:24-28

Reflection

Our nine days of prayer conclude with another promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit to transform us. God has given us this gift in Baptism. It is now time for us to claim these gifts and go forth as God's joyful, redeemed, and committed people.

Come to the Eucharist tomorrow on Pentecost as an act of renewal and dedication. When we practice our faith in worship, prayer, and service, the Holy Spirit strengthens these gifts in us as individuals and as a community for the healing of the world.

Let us go forth rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

Alleuia. Allelua!

Prayer

Blessed are you, sovereign God and eternal Father.

Daily your Spirit renews the face of the earth,

bringing strength out of weakness,

hope out of despair

and life out of death.

By the power of your Spirit,

may your blessing rest upon all whom you call,

especially those gathered in prayer at this time.

May the Spirit's presence quicken trust

in your acceptance and adoption,

your equipping and empowering.

Continue to form us in the likeness of Christ,

that we may be witnesses of your astonishing love,

and fill us afresh with life in all its fullness.

Blessed be God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever.

(Times and Seasons, Church of England), adapted

Notes:

Use these blank pages for note or a brief prayer journal