

Closing Prayers of Intercession

Reflecting on what we've shared let us place our prayers before our God:

Response: Mary Spouse of the Spirit deal gently with us.

For those blind to their own greatness, Spirit open their eyes. **R**

Open the ears of those who can't hear the words of love that are being spoken to them. **R**

For those paralysed by the lack of self confidence may they leap with joy because the Lord is near. **R**

Help us to be people who touch others by our acts of kindness, encourage others when they are down and bring new life and joy into their wilderness. **R**

Individual intercessions

Closing Song

Open my eyes, Lord Help me to see your face
Open my eyes, Lord Help me to see

Open my ears, Lord Help me to hear your voice
Open my ears, Lord Help me to hear

Open my heart, Lord Help me to love like you
Open my heart, Lord Help me to love

And the first shall be last
And our eyes are opened
And we'll hear like never before
And we'll speak in new ways
And we'll see God's face in places we've never known

I live within you Deep in your heart, O Lord
I live within you Rest now in me



Pallottine Camino to Christmas - Advent Year A Week 3

Gathering Song

O Saviour come to those who wait
And open wide the heav'nly gate
Drop down O clouds like gentle dew
The One whose love makes all things new
Oh come, Oh come, Emmanuel
And save your suff'ring Israel



On this third Sunday of advent, called "rejoice Sunday" the mood shifts from waiting to joyful anticipation of the One who is coming to save us. Anticipation is more than excitement. It's a matter of taking action so that we are prepared. Rejoice! The Lord is near! In the despair, trials and struggles of the Jewish refugees in the 70 year winter of exile in Babylon, Isaiah points to the coming of spring. Nature bursts into life and sings for joy, for they shall see the glory of God. The prophet evokes the memory of their ancestors, led by God through the desert to the promised land. To those who felt debilitated, useless, physically weak, he says : "Be strong. Do not fear. Here is your God."

We listen to the Word of The Lord

First Reading

A reading from the prophet Isaiah (35:1-6,10)

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Gospel

John is in prison (in the wilderness) and feels discouraged. Jesus provides encouragement both to John and then to us.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew (11:2-11)

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

In your times of discouragement what brought new life into your wilderness?

Where is the Spirit at work in our lives that opens our eyes to the One who is coming?

Vincent Pallotti and the Fire of the Holy Spirit

In our helplessnesses, like the Jewish exiles and John in prison, there is help. The Power source from on high is available to us if only we can say yes. Mary as spouse of the spirit brought Jesus into our world. She brought the Spirit into the lives of the dispirited apostles in the Cenacle, the Upper/Last Supper room. Vincent calls Mary, Queen of Apostles, who teaches us how to say yes and who intercedes for us so that power from on high descends into our lowly condition.

In the wilderness of the modern world we are faced with a massive breakdown in faith, family, morality and culture. Pallotti similarly lived in a time of revolution, the French Revolution and the importing of its spirit by Napoleon's occupation of Rome. He knew the *wounded sense of belonging* in people. In revolution, it's not only gas, light and water that are disconnected. People's lives are disconnected. Pallotti sought to connect people in faith and love to create living communities of prayer and apostolic action.

One powerful, unifying image that came to the forefront for Vincent was the image of the Cenacle where on the first Pentecost the Holy Spirit was sent to Mary and the Apostle to fortify them for their Apostolic work ahead. As fire the Spirit comes with power not only

to the apostles but also to the laity and sends them to spread the Good News that Jesus is alive and active among us. **We need the Spirit to enliven us to go out and serve.**

Where is the Cenacle in your life that enables you to say yes with Mary Queen of Apostles, and receive the power of the Holy Spirit?

In 1835 Vincent received an illumination to found the Union of Catholic Apostolate and called all to be apostles. In his apostolic prayer to Mary Queen of Apostles he wanted members of the Union to commit themselves, 'to revive faith and get the fire of love burning' in each one's heart so that set on fire through the Spirit's love, each priest, brother, sister or lay person would be transformed for mission. Aware of love grown cold in the hearts of people, Pallotti quoted Jesus' words, "I have come to cast fire on the earth," to inspire people to be missionary evangelisers, effective in spreading the Gospel. He writes "Jesus had come to cast the divine fire of his love on all the earth, and wished that it caught fire in everyone. For this alone did he work and strive, that in all, the fire of charity would burn in response to the infinite love with which he had come to redeem us at the cost of an obedience to death on a cross" (OCC III:175-6).

Pope Francis appeals to us in similar words: "How I long to find the right words to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelisation full of fervour, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction! Yet I realise that no words of encouragement will be enough unless the fire of the Holy Spirit burns in our hearts."

Have you shared what God has done in your life and experienced the Spirit of Joy as the result?

Do I intentionally respond to the urging of the Spirit?

"When we open ourselves to the Spirit, the scriptures come alive, the sacraments become powerful means in our lives. One lady told me, "Before, the scriptures were on ice, now they are on fire." A Spirit-filled evangelisation is one guided by the Holy Spirit, for He is the soul of the Church called to proclaim the Gospel". "I once more evoke the Holy Spirit to renew, stir up and impel the Church to go forth boldly to evangelise all peoples" (ibid).

Our Christian identity is to be a missionary church, an evangelising church, fired up by the Holy Spirit and set on fire with a love that takes us to the ends of the earth. We exist for mission.

How can Mary Queen of Apostles lead us to be Apostles with an alive, burning sense of mission? How did she do it? How can we do it? How do you stoke the fire? Are there opportunities for us to be missionary evangelisers in our parish/community?