

Prayer

God our Father, in Jesus Christ you have freed us for a life that goes beyond ourselves. Guide us with your Spirit and help us to orient our lives as brothers and sisters in Christ, who lived, suffered, died and rose again for us, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Day 3: We regard no one according to the flesh (2 Cor. 5:16)

1 Sam. 16:1, 6-7 The Lord looks not at outward appearances but at the heart.
Ps. 19:7-13 The commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes.
Acts 9:1-19 Saul becomes Paul.
Mt. 5:1-12 The Beatitudes.

Encountering Christ turns everything upside down. Saint Paul had that experience on the road to Damascus. For the first time he could see Jesus for who he really was: the Saviour of the world. His perspective changed completely. He had to lay his human, worldly judgment aside. We often judge according to human standards. We make claims or do things "in the name of the Lord" that in reality may be self-serving. In submitting ourselves to the rule of Christ today, we are called to see others as God sees them, without mistrust or prejudice.

Prayer

Triune God, you are the origin and goal of all living things. Forgive us when we only think of ourselves and are blinded by our own standards. Open our hearts and our eyes. Teach us to be loving, accepting and gracious, so that we may grow in the unity which is your gift. To you be honour and praise, now and for ever. Amen.

Day 4: Everything old has passed away (2 Cor. 5:17)

Gen. 19:15-26 Don't look back.
Ps. 77: 5-15 God is always faithful.
Phil. 3: 7-14 Forgetting what lies behind.
Luke 9:57-62 Keep your hand on the plough.

Looking back can be helpful and is often necessary for the healing of memories. It can also paralyze us and prevent us from living in the present. Saint Paul's message here is liberating: "Everything old has passed away". The Bible encourages us to keep the past in mind, to draw strength from our memories, and to remember what good God has done. But it also asks us to leave the old, even what was good, in order to follow Christ and live a new life in him. What could we learn by reading together the history of our divisions and mutual mistrust?

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, today and for ever. Heal the wounds of our past, bless our pilgrimage towards unity today and guide us into your future, when you will be all in all, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen

Day 5: Everything has become new (2 Cor. 5:17)

Ez. 36:25-27 Receiving a new heart from God.
Ps. 126 Being filled with joy.
Col. 3:9-17 Being renewed in Christ.
John 3:1-8 Being born in the Spirit.

Saint Paul encountered Christ, the risen Lord, and became a renewed person. God lives in us by the power of the Holy Spirit and lets us share in the life of the Holy Trinity. This new life becomes visible when we allow it to take shape and live it out in "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." The more we are in Christ, the closer we are to each other. On this 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we remember both the achievements and tragedies of our history. The love of Christ compels us to actively seek unity and reconciliation.

Prayer

Triune God, you reveal yourself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and yet you are one. You break through our human boundaries and renew us. Give us a new heart to overcome all that endangers our unity in you. We pray in the name of Christ Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day 6: God reconciled us to himself (2 Cor. 5:18)

Gen. 17:1-8 God makes a covenant with Abraham
Ps. 98 The world has seen the victory of God
Rom. 5:6-11 God reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ
Luke 2:8-14 Proclamation of the good news

Reconciliation is fascinating and terrifying at the same time; it means renouncing our desire for power and recognition. In Jesus Christ, God graciously reconciles us to himself even though we have turned away from him. God's action goes beyond even this: He reconciles not only humanity, but the whole of creation to himself. Similarly all churches are called to bring forth reconciliation in their communities.

Prayer

Merciful God, out of love you made a covenant with your people. Empower us to resist all forms of discrimination. Let the gift of your loving covenant fill us with joy and inspire us to greater unity. Through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.

Day 7: The ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19)

Gen. 50:15-21 Joseph is reconciled with his brothers
Ps. 72 God's kingdom brings righteousness and peace
1 John 3:16b-21 God's love compels us to love one another
John 17:20-26 Jesus prays for the unity of his church

Reconciliation between God and us is the key reality of our Christian faith. Paul was convinced that the love of Christ compels us to bring God's reconciliation to bear in all aspects of our life. Today this leads us to examine our consciences in

relation to our divisions. God gives the grace needed for the healing of broken relationships, including the work of overcoming divisions within Christianity.

Prayer

God of all goodness, we give you thanks for reconciling us and the whole world to yourself in Christ. Empower us, our congregations and our churches in ministries of reconciliation. Heal our hearts and help us to spread your peace. “Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy”. We pray in the name of Christ Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day 8: Reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20)

Micah 4:1-5 In the last days justice will reign.
Ps. 87 Glorious things are spoken of God.
Rev. 21:1-5a God will make a new heaven and a new earth.
John 20:11-18 Meeting the risen Christ leads to personal mission.

These readings speak of the day when the whole perfected creation finally arrives at its goal, the fulfilment of God’s reign, the day when God will be all in all, when suffering will be transformed into joy, when the Church will be revealed in her beauty and grace as the one body of Christ. Wherever we gather in the Spirit to sing together about the fulfilment of God’s promises, the heavens break open and we begin here and now to dance to the melody of eternity. As we can already experience this presence of heaven, let us celebrate together.

Prayer

Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we thank you for this week of prayer, for being together as Christians and for the different ways we have experienced your presence. Let us always praise your holy name together so that we may continue to grow in unity and reconciliation. Amen.

Adapted for parishes in Aotearoa New Zealand by the Catholic Bishops Committee for Ecumenism. The full resource jointly prepared and published by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches can be found at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/index.htm
Select Pontifical Councils – Promoting Christian Unity – Spiritual Ecumenism at the International Level – Booklets published in preparation for the “2017” week — English.
New Zealand website: www.catholic.org.nz — Ecumenism

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity **Ko te Wā Karakia mō te Kotahitanga o Ngā Hāhi** **Karaitiana**

28 May to 4 June 2017

Biblical Reflections and Prayers for personal and group use

DAY 1 One has died for all (2 Cor. 5:14)

Isaiah 53:4-12 He gave his life as an atoning sacrifice.
Ps. 118: 1,14-29 God did not abandon me to death.
1 John 2:1-2 Christ died for all.
John 15:13-17 Giving his life for his friends.

Jesus did not die just for his own people, nor for those who sympathized with his teachings; He died for all people, past, present and future. Faithful to the Gospel, many Christians down the centuries have laid down their lives for their friends. One such person was Saint Maximilian Kolbe, who was imprisoned in the concentration camp at Auschwitz and who in 1941 willingly gave up his life so that a fellow prisoner could live. Because Jesus died for all, all have died with him (2 Cor 5:14). What does it mean to say that Jesus died for all? The German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: “I am a brother to another person through what Jesus Christ did for me and to me; the other person has become a brother to me through what Jesus Christ did for him.”

Prayer

God our Father, in Jesus you gave us the one who died for all. He lived our life and died our death. You accepted his sacrifice and raised him to new life with you. Grant that we, who have died with him, may be made one by the Holy Spirit and live in the abundance of your divine presence now and for ever. Amen.

Day 2 Live no longer for themselves (2 Cor. 5:15)

Micah 6:6-8 God has told you what is good.
Ps. 25:1-5 God of my salvation, show me your ways.
1 John 4:19-21 We love because God first loved us.
Mt. 16:24-26 Those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we live in the life-giving power of Christ, who lived, died, and rose again for us. When we ‘lose’ our life for his sake, we gain it. The prophets were constantly faced with questions concerning the right way to live before God. The prophet Micah found a very clear answer to this question: “To do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.” The author of Psalm 25 knew that we cannot do this by ourselves and cried out to God for guidance and strength.