

The Seventh Week of Easter – May 18-22, 2026

Monday of the Seventh Week of Easter - Prayer for the Week

O King of glory, Lord of hosts, uplifted in triumph far above all heavens, leave us not without consolation but send us the Spirit of truth whom You promised from the Father; for You live and reign with Him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Have you ever been in a situation in which you just did not know what to say? I think many of us have been. Perhaps it was at a funeral or the personal tragedy of a friend. You sat in the room and stared glumly at the floor and simply had no words to say. Those are hard times. I have been in the room when people have learned of terminal cancer diagnoses and another time when the doctor told a man his daughter was not going to wake up and live. In those moments, words are wholly inadequate. There is nothing to say which will make this better.

We pray today for consolation. That is surely a consolation which we so desperately need as human beings who have been cut off from God by sin. We need the gentle love of God for our broken lives and so we beg Christ to pour out that Holy Spirit whom he promised to us. But consolation is not only something for me. Consolation also comes from God through me to another. I cannot tell you what people said to me in the terrible days after my mom died in a car accident a few years ago. But I can tell you who was there. My family and friends surrounded me and were the consolation I needed. I remember their faces as they grieved with me.

This week remembers the strange days between the Ascension of our Lord and the Day of Pentecost. For ten days the disciples gathered, prayed, and wondered what the strange promise of Jesus would mean. Today, as we wait with the disciples who wondered what would happen next, be present for someone else. Seek out a friend or look for a person in need. Your words do not carry the burden of consolation alone. You may not know what to say. But your presence speaks eloquently and through you God may be answering this prayer for another.

Tuesday of the Seventh Week of Easter – Acts 1:12-26

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, ¹⁶ “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” ¹⁸ (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and

falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. ¹⁹ And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) ²⁰ “For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

“‘May his camp become desolate,
and let there be no one to dwell in it’;

and

“‘Let another take his office.’

²¹ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” ²³ And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴ And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” ²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Have you ever wondered why we have twelve members in most juries in our legal system? It is a very old tradition, far older than the United States themselves. In fact, its roots go back, through British common law into the Roman world in which Jesus lived so long ago. In the ancient world, if 12 witnesses stepped forward to attest to an event, it was deemed true. There was no need for a trial at this point, one could proceed immediately to sentencing if there a crime had been involved. If 12 people could say that they saw this man steal the money, the trial was over. Today the prosecutor in a jury trial must convince a dozen people that it happened. They have to say “Yes, it did.” Oregon recently had its peculiar system challenged and rejected. All jury trials need all the jurors to agree. Even one holdout can hang a jury.

Peter sees the need for a 12th witness. Judas has killed himself and now the number stands at 11. They look for any others who have been witness to the ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ and, amazingly, they come up with two, men who have never been mentioned in any of the Gospels to this point, Matthias and Joseph. It is the last we ever hear of this Matthias and Joseph, but we do not hear much of the other disciples either from this point forward except for Peter and John.

I have long taken considerable comfort from this account. My own efforts at evangelism often seem to fall on deaf ears. I get discouraged. I want to see success because I love the people to whom I bear this witness. But Peter suggests today that the 12th witness is important. I think of it this way: I might only be witness number 5 or somewhere else in that list. I always imagine that I am James the Younger or another of the otherwise anonymous disciples among Jesus’ followers. It is the twelfth witness who will get to see the person come to faith, but he or she needs to hear the other eleven. They are all just as important. If I, as witness number 5, am silent, then the big day might have to wait for yet another to come along and round out that number.

I know the Holy Spirit does not work so mechanically. He can work his miracle regardless of human effort or the number of witnesses; nevertheless, He has promised to work through my witnessing. I love this story because it tells me that I am part of a team of witnesses in the life of every other human being. I do not bear the whole burden, only the burden of a witness. I must tell what I have seen and heard. Christ has risen from the dead and I have known his presence in some way. I just need to speak about that. Bear witness to the resurrected Christ today. Praise God publicly, in the hearing of another, that God has been active in your life. Bear that witness.

Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Easter - Psalm 68:1-10

- ¹ God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered;
and those who hate him shall flee before him!
- ² As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away;
as wax melts before fire,
so the wicked shall perish before God!
- ³ But the righteous shall be glad;
they shall exult before God;
they shall be jubilant with joy!
- ⁴ Sing to God, sing praises to his name;
lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts;
his name is the LORD;
exult before him!
- ⁵ Father of the fatherless and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.
- ⁶ God settles the solitary in a home;
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.
- ⁷ O God, when you went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness, Selah
- ⁸ the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain,
before God, the One of Sinai,
before God, the God of Israel.
- ⁹ Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad;
you restored your inheritance as it languished;
- ¹⁰ your flock found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.

I am feeling some emotional and spiritual kinship with those disciples whom Jesus sent back to Jerusalem in Acts 1. He told them to head back to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:7-8). He did not tell them how long to wait. He rather vaguely described the Holy Spirit as “power from on high” and that they would be “witnesses.” All this sounds clear enough in hindsight after Pentecost, but I can only imagine was mighty confusing at the time.

Are you, like me, more than a little confused by what God is up to these days. I look around at the churches in my area and notice that they only have a fraction of the people who used to attend. I look at the ages of many of those who remain, and I am concerned for the future. The Psalmist today helps us. He reminds us that as Christians we do not face the future with our eyes only on the mist-enshrouded future. We have a far clearer view of things by looking back. The psalmist anticipates that God will rise in strength but also turns his eye backward to see what God has already done. He remembers the Exodus and how God provided for the vulnerable people then with unlooked for abundance from the skies. He remembered when the earth shook and when God's people found a dwelling place and the needy were provided for.

The future can frighten us. The unknown is rarely comforting. Take a cue from the psalmist today. If you are frightened or anxious about what is to come, look back. Look back to what God has done in the past in your own life and what he has done which is recorded in Scripture. The Lord who governs all has holes in his hands and feet where he bled for you. Do not get me wrong in this. It may be a wild ride. Sometimes it was in the days of the Judges or David. In the NT Paul got stoned a few times and shipwrecked at least once. But God never abandoned his people. That is the God who goes into the future with you. He is the father to the fatherless and the protector of widows. He settles the solitary in a home and leads the prisoners to prosperity. He provides for the needy.

Thursday of the Seventh Week of Easter – I Peter 4:12-5:11

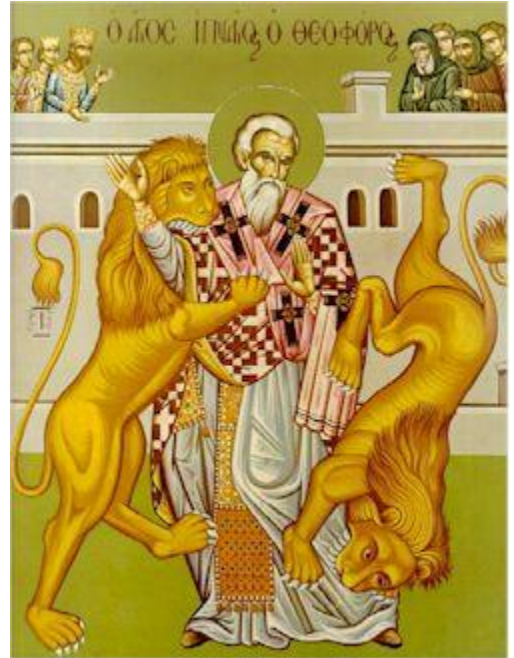
¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And

“If the righteous is scarcely saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.



Peter wrote to a people under persecution when it was apparent that the lion, their ancient foe, was prowling about seeking whom he might devour. The image I have included with this reading is an icon of St. Ignatius of Antioch. He died in the first decades of the second century, about 50 years after Peter, but Peter might have known this man. There is a fascinating tradition about Ignatius. According to this tradition Ignatius was the little boy whom Jesus took into his arms in Mark 9:33-37. He grew up and became a leader in the Church, eventually the overseer of the Christian community in the important city of Antioch. He was denounced as a Christian and sent to Rome for execution in the arena. The tradition is that he was killed by leopards or lions, hence his dramatic icon.

By this point, Ignatius was old, over 80. He got wind that the Christian community in Rome was planning to appeal for clemency because he was so old, hoping the emperor would spare this old man such a fate. Ignatius would have none of it. If you are interested, a quick internet search will find a translation of the letter he wrote the Romans begging them not to do this. It is a short letter and a fascinating read. He was happy to suffer with Christ and longed to bear witness to his faith in this way. He did not fear the lions or the leopards.

With Ignatius and countless other Christians in the centuries since our Lord’s resurrection, we suffer in some way. Some suffer much more profoundly than others, but we all to some extent share in Christ’s sufferings. Peter says it is normal and a shared experience of Christians around the world. You are not alone. We all have heard the call of Jesus who exhorts us to take up a

cross and follow him. We also look forward to our own exaltation from this suffering at the hand of Christ. We cast our anxieties on him, confident that He will keep the promises he has made to us. This enables us to be humble, patient, and gentle with those who are weak. We fight against the foe, confident that the victory has been won. Pray God gives you the courage for this day. The foe still prowls and you need it.

Friday of the Seventh Week of Easter – John 17:1-11

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

⁶ “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

Luther once said that he wished that he could pray like his dog watched him eat sausage. If you have ever had a dog, you know what he meant and can imagine Dr. Luther’s dog being transfixed by the Reformer as he ate his bratwurst. Luther wanted that intensity and single-minded devotion which his dog had as he watched the piece of sausage ascend from the plate to Luther’s mouth.

Have you ever thought about your prayer life? Luther said that he could not accomplish anything without spending a couple hours in prayer. I have always found that to be a devastating comment. I sometimes cannot muster up more than a few minutes in prayer. I could do so much better. I compare myself to Luther and find myself lacking. But he compared himself to his own dog and found himself lacking. What does that say about me?!

Good news for me and you today. Jesus prays for us with an intensity and single-mindedness which exceeds even that of Luther’s dog or any saint. The truth be told, even in my best moments I am still beset by sin. As Paul says that old man clings tightly to me. I cannot shake him. Only Christ has won that battle. But John 17 tells us something about Jesus. Having conquered sin, death, and devil, Jesus prays for us. He beseeches the Father on our behalf.

This is not an excuse for a pallid prayer-life. Rather it is an invitation to a robust life of prayer and service. Jesus is praying today. You can rest assured that He will pray all that you need prayed. But that opens your heart to pray for what you feel and know. You no longer need to worry about covering all the bases or meeting some prayer minimum. Christ has prayed the maximum for you. Now God's heart and his very being stand wide open to you and your prayer. Jesus has opened that door and fulfilled that mission. Now you can pray and be sure that God loves what he hears, even when they are the faltering, too-infrequent, or simple prayers of the prayer-novice. Say a prayer today. God wants to hear from you.