

## Weekly Readings:

This week we will begin a new theme: **“your time has come, the time for love”** (cf. **Ezekiel 16:8**). We are the privileged ones living in the fullness of time where the Holy Trinity has been revealed to us as the one, true God and offers us everything in order to love in the same way that God has loved us. The Father's gift of the Holy Spirit, who he sent to dwell in us, will help us in our weakness to witness to the life and love of his only beloved son Jesus Christ. It is no longer a time of waiting for our Messiah to come and save us or waiting for Pentecost Day to come but a time for us to open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit whose pure and faithful love longs to transform our lives into God's unconditional and freely given love for every child in the world. This love is the only love that will move us to find new and creative ways to evangelize others so that they will not only see God's love at work in us and among us but they will also come to know the source of this love and experience his love in a personal way forever.

**Day 1 Acts 1:1-8** **“...While at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. 'It is', he had said, 'what you have heard me speak about: John baptised with water but, not many days from now, you are going to be baptised with the Holy Spirit.' Now having met together, they asked him, 'Lord, has the time come for you to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit which will come on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to earth's remotest end.'**

Take a seat at the table with Jesus and his disciples and allow him to tell you the same thing that he told his disciples: **“you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit...”** Do you actually believe this? If the power of the Holy Spirit was fully at work in someone's life would they be doing the same works as Jesus and even greater works (**John 14:12**)?

In prayer, take a moment to allow Jesus to remind you of his works that he performed during his earthly life, especially his work of reconciling people back into a relationship with his heavenly Father and having their eternal life restored. Do you

believe that you, too, are able to perform such works with the Holy Spirit's power? Or are you doubtful and make excuses to evangelize? Who is God inviting you to witness to in your life today?

**Day 2 Ephesians 2:17-22** **“He came to bring the good news of peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. Through him, then, we both in the one Spirit have free access to the Father. So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow-citizens with the holy people of God and part of God's household. You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Every structure knit together in him grows into a holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built up into a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit.”**

It is interesting how at Jesus' birth the angel's proclaimed: **“on earth peace for those he favours”** (**Luke 2:14**) and when Jesus appeared after his death and resurrection he said to his disciples: **“Peace be with you”** (**John 20:26**). The call to evangelize is **“to bring the good new of peace”** by offering our brothers and sisters Jesus as their way, truth and life (**John 14:6**).

In prayer, first reflect on Jesus' way of life and give the Holy Spirit freedom to confront any aspect of your own life that is in need of being transformed, eg. your treatment of someone you live with or work with, the topics of conversation that you have with others, your daily habits and priorities, the use of your mind and body, how you invest your time on weekends, etc. In the measure that we give the Holy Spirit permission to lead us to lasting peace within ourselves then we will be better equipped to lead others in the same way of peace.

**Day 3 Matthew 8:14-17** **“And going into Peter's house Jesus found Peter's mother-in-law in bed and feverish. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him. That evening they brought him many who were possessed by devils. He drove out the spirits with a command and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: He himself bore our sicknesses away and carried our diseases.”**

Peter witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit at work in Jesus in a very close way when he healed his mother-in-law simply through his touch. However, he also saw the power of Jesus' **“command”** that drove out evil spirits. What **“command”** did Jesus make for the evil spirits to be driven out? His words must have been full of truth and deep conviction.

Do you allow Jesus to **“command”** any evil temptation you face to go away? Or do you dwell on the temptation and entertain the possible pleasures and fame associated with following it, eg. to sleep-in longer than necessary, to watch a sensual scene that leads to impure thoughts and actions, to over-eat, to buy unnecessary things, to dress immodestly, to speak over the top of someone rather than to let them finish their sentence, etc.? Only in the measure that we allow Jesus to **“command”** our evil temptations to go away will we have the conviction to encourage others to resist their temptations and to trust in Christ as their eternal source of life and love.

**Day 4 Mark 14:27-31** **“And Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away, for the scripture says: I shall strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered; however, after my resurrection I shall go before you into Galilee.' Peter said, 'Even if all fall away, I will not.' And Jesus said to him, 'In truth I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will have disowned me three times.' But he repeated still more earnestly, 'If I have to die with you, I will never disown you.' And they all said the same.”**

Peter found it difficult to accept that he would disown Jesus in the moment that he would have to suffer. Do we feel identified with Peter and think that we will never deny Jesus while we are safely sitting in prayer but then, in certain moments when we are in a conversation with someone about a delicate moral topic, we remain silent about Christ's teachings because we perceive that the other person will insult us or mock us and tell us we are very judgmental for our stance?

In prayer, take a moment to allow Jesus to tell you why he never compromised on speaking the truth, even when it meant that he would suffer greatly in the hands of evil men. Allow him to encourage you to not be afraid of the awkward rejections or hostile isolation that you risk experiencing if you continue to speak truth into our culture of death.

**Day 5 Acts 5:25-42** "...they had the apostles called in, gave orders for them to be flogged, warned them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. And so they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, glad to have had the honour of suffering humiliation for the sake of the name. Every day they went on ceaselessly teaching and proclaiming the good news of Christ Jesus, both in the temple and in private houses."

After receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit, Peter and the rest of the disciples underwent a powerful transformation whereby they became unstoppable evangelizers. Nothing could prevent them from "**proclaiming the good news of Christ Jesus**" both publically and privately.

In prayer, acknowledge with Jesus if you are like the disciples who were consistent in witnessing to Christ not only in their Christian gatherings but also with closed-minded Jewish authorities and pagans who were a risk to their physical life. Do you pick and choose who you witness to or are you a consistent Christian? It is important to identify any fears you have in order to surrender them to God and allow him to lead you in the path that you may not wish to go, eg. fear of being ridiculed, fear of losing your job, fear of being called derogatory names, fear of looking stupid, etc.

**Day 6 Romans 8:26-28** "...the Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness, for, when we do not know how to pray properly, then the Spirit personally makes our petitions for us in groans that cannot be put into words; and he who can see into all hearts knows what the Spirit means because the prayers that the Spirit makes for God's holy people are always in accordance with the mind of God. We are well aware that God works with those who love him, those who have been called in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good."

If we take our responsibility to love and evangelize others seriously then we will soon learn that we need to depend on the Spirit to "**help us in our weakness**" because the task of evangelization implies to accompany people in their spiritual processes (which many times involves walking with them through complicated situations). It is not our human minds that know the answers to our own problems or others' problems but the Spirit who "**personally makes our petitions for us.**"

In prayer, place into the hands of the Holy Spirit the situations and people that are already a part of your life and that need God's help to be healed, restored and empowered to live the fullness of life that Jesus came to give. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you all his gifts (i.e. wisdom, knowledge, understanding, right judgment, piety, fortitude, and fear of the Lord) in order to confidently continue the mission of evangelization that God has entrusted you.

**Day 7 2 Corinthians 5:17-20** "...So for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old order is gone and a new being is there to see. It is all God's work; he reconciled us to himself through Christ and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. I mean, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not holding anyone's faults against them, but entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were urging you through us, and in the name of Christ we appeal to you to be reconciled to God."

Everyday, as we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit in prayer, we continue to be transformed into "**a new creation**" with his tender words of truth and the strength he gives us to love to the same extreme as Jesus has loved us.

In prayer, begin by offering your full human reality (i.e. your victory moments in being faithful to Christ and also your failures), asking the Holy Spirit to allow you to experience being reconciled with God through Christ. Allow Christ to reassure you that he came for the sick, not the healthy (**Mark 2:17**), and that he needs you to believe in his mercy and call to follow him so that, through you, he can continue to rescue many other sinners. Is there a sin in your life that you think is unforgivable or impossible for Jesus to help you overcome? Dialogue with Jesus about this and allow him to tell you that nothing is impossible for the one who believes (**Mark 9:23**). Is there someone in your life that also needs to hear these hopeful words of Jesus and experience being reconciled with him?

Prepared by the Verbum Dei Missionaries,  
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Website: [verbumdeibrisbane.weebly.com](http://verbumdeibrisbane.weebly.com)

# School of the Word

## Weekly Readings

*"your time has come, the time for love"*

*(Ezekiel 16:8).*

*Week 1: Time For Evangelization*



*"... 'You must repent,' Peter answered, 'and every one of you must be baptised...'"*

*(Acts 2:38)*