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THY KINGDOM COME

# Prayer Journal

2022/05/26～06/05 (Ascension～Pentecost)



NSKK (Nippon Sei Ko Kai)

# Renew us by your Spirit



"Thy Kingdom come" is an annual prayer movement which takes place from Ascension to Pentecost. Launched in 2016 following a call from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the Church of England, it has since grown into a global movement. It is hoped that all participants praying "Thy Kingdom come" will deepen their own fellowship with Jesus, renew their confidence as witnesses of Christ, and lead others to a loving relationship with our Lord.

Before Ascension, Jesus said: 'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)', and his disciples 'constantly devoting themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14)', so we follow the example of this and we too pray during this period.

The prayer period is 11 days from Ascension Day (May 26th) to Pentecost Sunday (June 5th), and all are encouraged to think of 5 family members, friends, or acquaintances who you want to come to know Jesus as their Saviour, to write their names on the bookmarks, and then pray for those 5 people for the 11 days.

Nippon Sei Ko Kai has participated in this movement since 2020. This year, as a new trial, the themes for each day (Jesus, Praise, etc.) were taken from the original English version, but the major themes (the Way, Thoughts rising from the depths of our hearts, etc.), Bible verses, commentaries on the Word and prayers were prepared by the House of Bishops of NSKK.

In these days of hopeful waiting and praying between Ascension and Pentecost, may we all be renewed by the Spirit and made new in Christ.

House of Bishops, NSKK



Thy Kingdom come web page.  
Registration for prayer and various materials  
are available.  
<https://www.thykingdomcome.global/>

Below are the names of those you would like to pray for during this period. And let's pray that God will change the lives and daily lives of those people

## The five people I remember ...

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

## The Prayer for Thy Kingdom Come

Almighty God, your ascended Son has sent us into the world to preach the good news of your kingdom: inspire us with your Spirit and fill our hearts with the fire of your love, that all who hear your word may be drawn to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



# 26 May (Feast of the Ascension)

## Day 1 – Jesus

### The Way

#### Word of God

*“Jesus has opened for us a new and living way through the curtain (that is, through his flesh).” (Heb 10:20)*

Life is often compared to a journey. While we are traveling, we don't stay in one place, but are always on the move, always in search of something. Today, we take one road to one place; tomorrow, we want to make a detour, so we take another road. That's how we choose our way.

Life is like that. We regret it when the path we take doesn't lead where we expected. But then, sometimes we can find ourselves cheered up by unforeseen good things.

Zacchaeus said, “It was on the roadside that I met Jesus.” Jesus calls out to him from under the tree he has been struggling to climb. “Come down,” he says. That call changes Zacchaeus' life.

A woman is caught in the act of adultery and dragged to the temple precincts. Jesus casts his judgement not on the woman, but on the heart of everyone there. He says to the woman, “Nor do I condemn you. Go.” And so, he shows her a new way.

To those in sickness, difficulty, loneliness, sorrow and despair, Jesus always ends by saying, “Go in peace.” And so that we may all enter His Kingdom in peace, he walks the way to the Cross. The way to the cross of Golgotha, so cruel and lonely. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” cries Jesus. The redemptive work of God, who made the one who knew no sin to be sin, has been fulfilled. The Kingdom opens at the end of our way.

Sometimes in our lives we get stuck. We get anxious. We wonder why such suffering is happening to us, or to someone we love. Sometimes our faith, which we thought we held fast, seems to fade away. At such times, we can still turn to the path that the Lord Jesus walked. He walked the way of Golgotha instead of me; he went to the Cross. And then we begin our life anew, hoping to see beyond that way the light of the Resurrection.

## Prayer

*The path we walk can be narrow, winding, lonely and uncertain. Lord, you are our Way: shine your light on our feet and guide us so that we can reach our destination. We ask this in the name of the Lord. Amen.*

27 May

## Day 2 – Praise

# Thoughts rising from the depths of our hearts

## Word of God

*Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress.  
Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day  
when I call.*

*For my days pass away like smoke, and my bones burn  
like a furnace.*

*He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will not  
despise their prayer.*

*Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a  
people yet unborn may praise the Lord.*

*(Ps 102:2-3, 17-18)*

When do we praise God? When we are full of joy because of the many blessings we have received? When we feel free from worry and suffering and feel saved? When we are healed of an illness?

Perhaps it is at times like these that we most feel God's love and praise for God welling up in us. Due to the spread of Covid-19 these past two years, we have been living under all sorts of restrictions, never knowing when we or our family members might be infected, or anyone might suddenly get seriously ill. To be honest, it's hard to offer praise to God in these circumstances.



The writer of Psalm 102 probably felt the same level of anxiety and unbelief, or greater still. He hopes that his cry of prayer will reach God, but there is a touch of anxiety behind it, as he wonders whether his prayers and cries will really be heard. Behind the cry for a swift answer in the day of his distress call, there seems to be a sense of resignation: “I haven’t got much of an answer back so far.”

But still, the Psalmist affirms, “God has taken care of me, and has not taken my prayers lightly.” He is also convinced that “a generation to come, a people yet unborn may praise the Lord.”

What is the basis for this assertion, even though he has not yet seen it come to pass? The cry of the soul that “the Lord God is the only one on whom I can finally rely.” The joy of realising this turns the crying voice into a call of praise.

## Prayer

*Faithful God, you watch over us even when we are in distress and think only of ourselves. May we recognise you in the fullness of your love and praise you with all our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

28 May

Day 3 – Thanks

## Remembered in Prayer

### Word of God

*Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* (Philippians 4:6)

When I was a high school student, I remember the impact of hearing my schoolteacher say, “Mrs so-and-so remembers each of your names and prays for you every day.” To be remembered and prayed for by a stranger, or in church on the anniversary of our birthday, baptism or confirmation, has power beyond our imagination.

In chapter 10 of the Acts of the Apostles, an angel appears in a vision to Cornelius, a centurion who valued prayer and almsgiving, calls him by name, and tells him: “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God” (Acts 10:4b). After several visionary experiences, encounters with Simon the tanner and Peter the Jew convinced him that received wisdom against impurity (that is, discrimination and prejudice) had been overturned; that everyone is loved by the same

God; that Jesus proclaimed the gospel of love, forgiveness and peace. The Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and he was baptised.

I think we need to thank God that we are supported by prayer and that he remembers us. Through prayer, we become receptive to visions and are transformed into people who pray and serve others. With hearts full of thanksgiving to the one who loves us without dividing us, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are sent out to our several callings.

Let us thank God for remembering us and keep in mind that as we pray, we are also being prayed for.

## Prayer

*God, you always protect and guide us. We thank you for remembering us and for giving us the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Send us as servants of love, forgiveness and peace so that the Kingdom you will for us may be realised in this world. Let us pray and work for the support of all people and for the preservation of the dignity of all life, including the natural environment. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Turn Around “Where is Your Focus?”

### God’ s Word

*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news. (Mark 1:15)*

These were Jesus’ first words as he began his mission. They could be taken to mean “first repent, and then believe in the gospel.” But the sense of the original text is that to repent is to believe the gospel.

The original meaning of the word ‘repent’ is ‘to change direction’ or ‘to turn.’ There is a saying that goes, “when you turn your eyes, you turn your mind.” Something that was previously invisible or that you were not trying to see begins to appear, and you begin to feel something that you did not feel before. In other words, when you redirect your mind’s eye from yourself and what’s right in front of you toward someone else, a sense of expansion, depth and worth can start to bloom within.

A scene from a film comes to mind, based on a famous international doctor, Patch Adams. In his youth, he was admitted to hospital with mental illness. Also in the hospital is a businessman named Arthur Mendelson, who suddenly holds out four fingers in front of him and asks,

“How many fingers am I holding up?” “Four,” Adams replies. “Four? Wrong!” So, Adams comes back to see him that night and asks him for the answer to the four-finger question. “Don’t ask me so soon,” Mendelson replies. But finally, the doctor learns. “How many do you see?” says Arthur. The doctor answers that there are still four fingers. “No,” says Arthur, “look beyond the fingers.” When he does, it looks like there are eight fingers. It depends on the focal distance from the eyes. So, the doctor learns from Arthur: “Never focus on the problem. Look at me! See the whole world anew every day.”

When you turn around and shift your focus, you will begin to see the person who is there with you. To do this, you need to ask yourself, “Where am I looking and what do I see?”

## Prayer

*Life-giving God, we can be so occupied and disturbed by daily events and cares that we can only see ourselves. Remind us of this and direct us by your Holy Spirit to turn around and change our direction. Remind us of you who are, always at our side, working in our lives. Open our eyes, hearts and ears that we may share in your divine work and make real your Kingdom. All this we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## Abundance of Truth

### God' s Word

*“During a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.” (2 Corinthians 8:2)*

This verse describes how, even amid poverty, kindness could still abound through joyful and willing giving.

In contradiction to greed, this encapsulates the very life of the Lord Jesus. He came down into the world and gave everything, opening his arms wide on the cross to save all repentant sinners from the death of sin and grant us life. This exemplifies the attitude expressed in Deuteronomy 15:8 of “meeting the need” of others. The Lord Jesus gave even his own life for the sake of sinners who needed it. But on the third day after his all-giving death on the Cross, he rose again. Where he gave all, he was given all by God the Father.

We may assume that we can become richer and richer by desiring and getting wealth for ourselves. In reality, the more we get, the richer and greedier we get, the poorer we get. Quite the opposite: the more we give, the richer

we become with the true riches: the riches God has shown us through the Lord Jesus.

When we give joyfully, we do not become poor. As the Lord Jesus gave everything on the Cross, and then rose again and ascended to the Father in glory, so our giving adds to our abundance.

## Prayer

*We thank you, Father, who made us and brought us into existence, for blessing us abundantly and inviting us to life in your Kingdom through Jesus. We thank you for giving us everything by resurrecting Jesus, who gave everything and died on the Cross, so that we might receive the true and abundant blessings of the Kingdom of God. Amen.*

31 May

Day 6 – Intercessory prayer

## Intercession with Thanksgiving

### God' s Word

*“When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God.”*  
*(Philemon 4)*

At the first church I was sent to as an ordained minister, I had a really hard time starting out in pastoral care. No matter what I did, nothing went right. The days just passed by. I felt suffocated, as if I had sunk to the bottom of a deep sea.

It was then that I visited a member of the congregation who lived in a home for the elderly. At the time, Mrs M was 90 years old. I took Mrs M's hand in her wheelchair and prayed in her memory. She finally responded with an “amen,” and then she took my hand again and prayed in a small voice for me.

“God, please encourage this young pastor. Please protect this pastor's family. With thanksgiving, I pray to you. Amen.”

I had always thought that the duty of the clergy was to pray for the congregation, but I learnt then that the clergy can also be prayed for by the congregation and interceded for to God.



Now I am reminded anew of the way Mrs M prayed with thanksgiving at that time. Indeed, Paul prayed with thanksgiving to God when he prayed intercession for Philemon. When we pray in intercession to God, how much do we pray with thanksgiving?

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul writes: “pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess 5:17-18).

For Paul, prayer of intercession is inseparable from prayer of thanksgiving. It is not a question of whether God will fulfil my prayer: when I pray, God has already heard my prayer. “Faith” is trusting in that fact and being thankful for it. Whenever we intercede and pray, we need to be people who are always thankful to God.

## Prayer

*God with us at all times, as pray to you for others, help us keep in mind that others are praying for us. Strengthen and encourage us to bring each of our intercessions and prayers to you with thanksgiving. We make our prayer in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Invitation

### Word of God

*Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.”*  
*(Mark 1:17)*

We want to get to know the five people we chose at the beginning of this course of prayer better, and many other people too, but it is hard to work up the courage to speak to them. So, we look for reasons not to. Maybe they seem busy, they are talking happily to someone else, or we don't know how they will react. But what if I decide to be bold and call out one of their names, even say a few words? What would I say next? I may run out of topics of conversation quickly, as all I really want is their company.

It's a risky moment when you call out someone's name. Your relationship with the other person suddenly grows. It should be a golden opportunity to put out your thoughts and for the other person to receive them – but it is difficult to find the courage to speak to them, or to continue the conversation. I don't get on that well with other people, and the five others may not be the type of

people who get on well either. They may well have major challenges in life and may not be able to relate smoothly to others.

But we have all received the same call from Jesus. Jesus calls out to each of us amid the confusing difference of our personalities. He calls us by name and says, “Follow me. I will make you fishers of people.” In other words, “you, follow me, and I will make you into a people person.” What, me like this? With all the problems I’ve got? And those five?

I have many doubts, but Jesus, lonely and powerless, calls out to me from the Cross, “Let’s make you into a people person.”

He has been calling us ever since the morning of his Resurrection.

## Prayer

*Lord God, amid all our weighty challenges, we thank you for looking to us and always inviting us to join you. Unprepared as we are, help us along the way of grace, which answers the call of your merciful invitation. This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## No Greater Love

### God' s Word

*“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.”* (John 15:12-14)

I first heard Christian teaching when I was in the first year of secondary school. The story remains with me to this day.

“One night in February 1957, a Danish ship sailing towards Kobe found a Japanese ship on fire off the coast of Hidaka, Wakayama. With winds gusting to over 20 mph, the crew of the Danish ship started to rescue the Japanese sailors who had been thrown into the freezing sea. However, the rescue efforts made little progress in the strong winds. The chief engineer, Mr Knudsen, bravely jumped into the torrent in the dark night, risking his own life. Despite the desperate rescue attempt, several Japanese sailors died. Knudsen was also lost. The next morning, Knudsen’s body was washed up on the beach at Hidaka. Hearing of this, the people of Hidaka

were deeply saddened and moved, and erected a memorial to mourn the soul of the brave man, and still offer flowers and keep it tidy. In the engine room where Knudsen worked, he left a well-worn Bible. He used to read the Bible a lot in his spare time between shifts.”

The Bible verse at the time was John 15:12-14, and the teaching point was that Knudsen’s deep Christian faith may have been behind his brave actions. As a first-year junior high school student, I thought what a brave man he was to jump into the freezing sea to rescue a foreigner: not even a friend, but a stranger.

Re-reading this Bible passage now, I note that verse 14 says: “You are my friends.” Lord Jesus, who died on the Cross, called us his friends and laid down his life for us. This Lord Jesus has given us a love that is even greater than laying down one’s life for one’s friends. Mr Knudsen must have been a man who accepted the Lord Jesus’ love and lived it.

## Prayer

*Lord, you continually give us a heart that fears and loves your name: protect us in your providence and nurture and guide us with your unchanging love. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## Jesus who Blesses Us

### Word of God

*But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.* (Mark 10:14-16)

After a theological debate between Jesus and the Pharisees about marriage, Jesus and his disciples returned home to hear from him about his views on the subject. Next, people brought their children to Jesus, to ask him to bless them. It seems the disciples may have been distracted by the children when they were trying to learn about God, the most important thing to them at the time. So, they rebuked those who brought the children. But when Jesus saw the disciples doing this, he got angry and said the words reported in today’s scripture passage.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;

repent, and believe in the good news” (Mark 1:15). The Kingdom of God can be thought of as God’s rule and his work. Accepting this Kingdom of God is what it means to believe: to believe, that is, that God’s work has been brought into the world by Jesus. Only then can I discover that I am already in the Kingdom of God. Sounds like a riddle, doesn’t it?

If we believe that God is at work in and around us, we can’t say that good things happen to us out of “luck.” They must be God’s work. If something is not going well at the moment, we can think that perhaps God is telling us to stop it. This is the kind of life that Jesus has blessed us with.

## Prayer

*God in heaven, you have blessed us by sending Jesus into this world. Bless the five people whom we remember before God and open their eyes to the fact that Jesus is our Saviour, who leads us and fills us with grace. We make our prayer through Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Filled with love

### Word of God

*For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel:*

*In returning and rest you shall be saved;*

*in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.*

*(Isaiah 30:15)*

When the former Bishop of the Diocese of Kobe Yutaka Nakamura retired, I remember him writing in the diocesan bulletin as he looked back on his ministry that his work had been sustained by 30 minutes of silent meditation every morning before worship in his chapel. I am sure that just quietly remaining in the presence of God, troubled by various issues and sometimes without any solutions, gave him energy for the day.

Silence does not just mean not talking. Mother Teresa said that silence of the thoughts, eyes and tongue are also necessary. Silence means remaining in God's presence alone with the eyes closed, trusting in God's love, being who we are, exposing our weaknesses, insecurities, fears, anger, hesitations, joy, gratitude... everything. Then we will feel deeply loved by God.



To relate to others and serve them better, we need time to be alone and silent before God.

## Prayer

*Lord God, I now remain silent in your presence. Let me hear the words you speak to me. Tell me the words you would speak through me. Fill me with your love. I ask this through the Lord Jesus. Amen.*

## Praying to the Holy Spirit

### Word of God

*And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*

*(Acts 2:2-4)*

When I read about the events of the Day of Pentecost, I think of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's gifts. I imagine that if God were to give me numerous gifts of the Holy Spirit and make me like Superman, then I could walk triumphantly through this diseased world. But then I would not be able to be compassionate about human weakness, ugliness, and sin. I recall that it is in weakness that I must find my strength (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Pentecost teaches mutual understanding and unity. People with different histories, cultures, languages, and customs came to Jerusalem and heard the gospel in their

own tongues. Those who accepted the gospel were given the Holy Spirit and became disciples of Christ. God gave the gift of the Holy Spirit to establish the Church and its missionary work.

There are always two desires in us: one for ourselves, and one for society. This conforms to God's will. God wants us to change personally. He wants us to become more like Christ. And for society, he wants the world we live in to be like the Kingdom of Heaven. The events of Pentecost are God's gift of grace to renew us and to send us to build the Kingdom of God.

## Prayer

*God, you have given us the gospel of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and you are sending us to our various places to make this world the Kingdom of God. Protect us so that we may fulfil our daily duties with the gifts of grace we have been given, and with faith that the Lord is with us. And, we pray, make the world God's Kingdom soon, so that we can all live together in peace and security. To this end, make us people who pray not only for ourselves but also for others. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## Finally

This year's prayer guide was prepared by the House of Bishops. How did you find the 11 days of prayer? We hope that your prayers will be realised.

Whenever I read about the Pentecost event in Acts 2, I am always reminded that it happened not just because the day of Pentecost came, but because of the realisation that the disciples were lacking something that needed to be replaced.

The disciples, who had believed Jesus' promise and were waiting for Pentecost, were praying fervently with all their hearts (1:14). What they realised in their prayers was that Judas was missing. So, to make up for the one missing witness to the Lord's resurrection, they added Matthias to their ranks.

The idea is that something was missing and needed to be made up for. The Holy Spirit descended at the point when they had waited and made amends. I think it is also important for us in these 11 days of prayer to look back and see if something is missing in us, in the church, or in the community: to find that missing thing, and to make up for it.

If you have any comments or requests about this year's guide, please let us know at NSKK Provincial Office "Thy Kingdom Come" department. We would appreciate your feedback for reflection in time for next year.



※ The Bible version used is the New Revised Standard Version.





(Illustrations : Anna Heslop.)



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