

# Biblical Reflections and Prayers for the 'Eight Days'

## 5 June – 12 June 2011



Day 1 – Sunday 5 June

### THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

#### Readings

Joel 2:21-22, 28-29

Psalms 46

Acts 2:1-12

John 14:15-21

I will pour out my spirit on all flesh

God is in the midst of the city

When the day of Pentecost had come

This is the spirit of truth

#### Commentary

The journey of this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, at the beginning of the Church's own journey.

The theme of this week is "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers." The "they" is the earliest Church of Jerusalem born on the day of the Pentecost when the Advocate, the Spirit of truth descended upon the first believers, as promised by God through the prophet Joel and by the Lord Jesus on the night before his suffering and death. All who live in continuity with the day of Pentecost live in continuity with the earliest Church of Jerusalem with its leader, James. This church is the mother church of us all. It provides the image of the Christian unity for which we pray this week.

According to an ancient eastern tradition, the succession of the church comes through continuity with the first Christian community of Jerusalem, thus maintaining its fellowship with the apostles. The Church of Jerusalem in apostolic times is linked with the heavenly Church of Jerusalem, which in turn becomes the icon of all Christian churches. The sign of continuity with the Church of Jerusalem for all the churches is maintaining the "marks" of the first Christian community through our devotion to the "apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers."

The present churches of Jerusalem live in continuity with the apostolic Church of Jerusalem particularly in its costly witness to the truth. Its witness to the gospel and its struggles against inequality and injustice reminds us that prayer for Christian unity is inseparable from prayer for peace and justice.

#### For Reflection/ Discussion

- What do you know about the 'present church of Jerusalem'? What do you think it would be like to be this church?
- Do you feel any continuity/connection with the church in Jerusalem? How? Is this relevant or worth thinking about in 21<sup>st</sup> Century churches?
- Does the image of Christian unity portrayed in this passage resemble the Christian community to which you belong? Are the 'marks' of the first Christian community still visible in your church?
- How does/can your local church join with other churches in working for peace and justice?

#### Prayer

Almighty and Merciful God, with great power you gathered together the first Christians in the city of Jerusalem, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, defying the earthly power of the Roman empire. Grant that, like this first church in Jerusalem, we may come together to be bold in preaching and living the good news of reconciliation and peace, wherever there is inequality and injustice. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who liberates us from the bondage of sin and death. Amen.



National Council of  
**Churches in Australia**  
Faith and Unity Commission