

# Seventh Week of Easter



## Blessing for a Garden

Holy God,  
creator of all that is good,  
bless this earth,  
and bless these seeds of life.  
Bless the hands  
that plant, water, and weed.  
Give us patience  
to tend our garden  
and eyes to see  
your beauty revealed here.  
Bless all animals and insects of  
the garden,  
that we may coexist peacefully.  
Bless all who visit here;  
may it give them joy.  
Help garden and gardeners to grow,  
day by day, in your grace.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

May 24, 2009

## Coming Home to Paradise

*(For a reflection on the Ascension of the Lord, see Thursday, May 21, in the previous week.)*

Paradise is our home, the place where we belong. In fact, we have never felt entirely at home anywhere else. The problem is, we don't know how to live in paradise. In Judeo-Christian tradition, the garden operates as a metaphor for paradise. The risen Jesus appears first in a garden, and the fact that Mary Magdalene mistakes him for a gardener is no coincidence. It is through Christ's work of salvation that we find our way back to paradise. In today's Gospel (John 17:11b-19) Jesus prays to the Father, saying that he is coming to the Father, but that his disciples will remain in the world. We hear him praying for their protection as they continue their work in the

world. He will stay closely connected to them, leading them to himself as they take up his mission to turn all humanity onto the path that will lead to him in paradise. Meanwhile, we catch glimpses of the paradise dimension when the creator is visible in creation.

Gardens are full of life and beauty. They are places where work, reflection, and joy naturally coincide. Try planting a garden this Easter season and explore the spiritual insights and rewards gardens offer. This could be a windowsill herb garden or a small flower garden planted around a birdbath. Bless your garden with the prayer on this page. Keep a journal, writing down whatever your garden teaches you about living in paradise.

# This Week at Home

## Monday, May 25

### Memorial of Saint Bede

The Venerable Bede was a seventh-century monk who spent his life in a monastery at Wearmouth, Northumbria. He was a scripture scholar, writer, and historian. Bede's writings include a number of hymns, such as "A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing" for Easter. Words and music can be found at <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/h/h/hymglory.htm>.

## Tuesday, May 26

### Memorial of Saint Philip Neri

Saint Philip Neri has been called "the apostle to the city of Rome." He founded a community of laymen there dedicated to helping pilgrims and caring for the sick. Ordained a priest in 1551, he was known for his humility and sense of humor, and became a wise and well-loved confessor. Anyone who suffers discomforts when approaching the Rite of Penance could invoke Saint Philip Neri's support and intercession.

## Wednesday, May 27

### Spiritual Waters

During the weeks of Easter, try exploring the spiritual meanings that water evokes in its natural settings. Plan a hike or a stroll near a creek, pond, lake, river, or ocean beach. Take along your Bible and read some of the great water-related stories, such as Genesis 1:1-10, Exodus 14, Exodus 17:1-7, Matthew 25:31-45, or John 4: 7-15. Pray some of the psalms with water imagery: 1, 24, 32, 42, and 69. If you go with companions, talk about how these stories and prayers strike you in that watery setting. If you go alone, write about them in your journal.

## Thursday, May 28

### Catch the Spirit

As we prepare to celebrate the solemnity of Pentecost, it's helpful to read the scripture account (Acts 2:1-11) that we will hear this Sunday, and to recall the vibrant but informal state of the Christian communities at that time. On Pentecost, the Church teaches, the Holy Spirit was poured out, and this outpouring of the Spirit made the Church visible in the world. At that moment (as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us in paragraph 1076), a new "age of the Church" began. Many customs for observing Pentecost have arisen around the world. In some European cultures, homes are decorated with

brilliant red flowers. To help make the day memorable for children, you might prepare windsocks and brightly colored wind wheels to decorate your garden. You could make or buy a kite to take out after Mass and enjoy the centuries-old custom of "catching the Spirit." Such festive customs awaken some of the playful joy that characterizes a healthy spiritual life.



## Friday, May 29

### Fruits of the Spirit

Evelyn Birge Vitz suggests a way to help young children learn about the fruits of the Holy Spirit: by preparing a fruit salad for your Pentecost meal, selecting a different fruit for each of the fruits of the Spirit. Nine fruits of the Spirit are listed in Galatians 5:22: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. To these are added modesty, chastity, and goodness. Make lists of the spiritual fruits, giving children a general idea of their meaning. Suggest imaginative ways fruit might represent these gifts; for example, grapes clustered together might represent love. Oranges, wrapped in a peel, could suggest modesty. Have children select fruit at the market, wash it, cut it up, and stir it together. Sprinkle the mixture with a little sugar or drizzle with honey.

## Saturday, May 30

### Reflection

As the Easter season comes to a close, it is a good time to reflect personally and as a family on your Easter experience. Did you try following any traditions or prayer practices new to you? What do you want to do again next year? Have you grown? Acknowledge this growth in one another, and think of ways to keep growing throughout the year.

