Pentecost Prayer Service of Hope

Opening Reflection
Leader: Pentecost Sunday is a day to celebrate hope, a hope evoked by the knowledge that God, through the Holy Spirit, is at work among us. It is a celebration of newness, of re-creation, of renewal of purpose, mission, and calling as God’s people. It is a celebration of God’s ongoing work in the world—the coming of God’s kingdom. And it is also a recognition of our participation in God’s work as the Holy Spirit is poured upon us.

Reading
Reader 1: On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As God has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20: 19-22)

Prayer
Reader 2: Scripture tells us that the disciples had hidden themselves out of fear. Then, Jesus breathed on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit burned within them as fire. And those followers of Jesus—the same that had isolated themselves out of fear—were filled with hope and became a living movement to bring about another creation—the reign of God.

Reader 3: Our work for justice and peace—our “yes” to the coming of God’s reign—can sometimes leave us disappointed, discouraged, hopeless. We look around at the suffering and misery of our brothers and sisters around the world, and we wonder if our work is meaningless. Will we hide away from the world of hunger, poverty, oppression and war?

Reader 4: Today we pray to God that the Holy Spirit fill our hearts, and that our lives be guided not by fear, but by dynamic hope. We ask that the fire of the Holy Spirit burn brightly within us as we work to create a more just and peaceful world. Amen.

Litany of the Holy Spirit
Reader 5 reads the first phrase of every line, and all participants respond with “grant us hope.”

Promise of God, grant us hope.
Ray of light, grant us hope.
Author of all good, grant us hope.
Source of life-giving water, grant us hope.
Consuming fire, grant us hope.
Ardent love, grant us hope.
Spiritual balm, grant us hope.

Spirit of love and compassion, grant us hope.
Spirit of wisdom and understanding, grant us hope.
Spirit of counsel and fortitude, grant us hope.
Spirit of knowledge and truth, grant us hope.
Spirit of peace and reconciliation, grant us hope.
Spirit of transformation and renewal, grant us hope.

Holy Spirit, Comforter, grant us hope.
Holy Spirit, Gift of God, grant us hope.
Holy Spirit Who fills the universe, grant us hope.

Amen.

Country Signs of Hope
Reader 1: To isolate ourselves from the injustices of the world would be to pervert the message God; it would be to give free reign to the kingdom of death. Bearing faithful witness to God’s justice and holiness will not be easy, but we must remember that we are not called to do it alone, for the Spirit who calls also says, “Lo, I am with you, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20).

Reader 2: Together, as a community with the Holy Spirit, let us reflection on six of the many struggling countries of the world. Let us look upon their challenges, their struggles, their difficulties. But we will not stop there. We will also acknowledge and rejoice in the signs of hope that we find there.
Pentecost Prayer Service of Hope (continued)

Reader 3: Haiti
The nation of Haiti has been dented by decades of poverty, environmental degradation, violence, instability and dictatorship which have left it as the poorest country in the Americas. For the past few weeks, thousands of Haitian civilians have been caught amidst the fighting that ensued between rebel forces and the Haiti government during their struggle for control. Since, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forced from power, looting, insecurity and power shortages have compounded the many difficulties already faced by residents.

[Brief moment of silence]

Reader 4: But there is hope. Peace is slowly being restored, and international aid is arriving from around the globe. And if the international community remains engaged through a long-term commitment to the country, Haiti will have a brighter future.

Reader 2: Isreal and Palestinian Territories
The division of the former British mandate of Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel in the years after the end of World War II have been at the heart of Middle Eastern conflicts for the past half century. Most recently, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, leader of Hamas, was assassinated by Israeli forces. The Holy See condemned this assassination as “an act of violence that cannot be justified in any state of law.” The world community fears retaliatory violence. It seems that the cycle of violence is unending.

[Brief moment of silence]

Reader 3: But there is hope. Bat Shalom is a women’s peace organization working toward a just peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. It is made up both Palestinian and Israeli women—women who refuse to silently bear witness to the destruction of the hope and future of a peaceful reconciliation. Through the development of educational programs, political action campaigns, and other activities, they hope to build a foundation for true peace.

Reader 5: Afghanistan
In 1996, the Taleban, which ruled about 90% of Afghanistan, introduced laws barring women from working and girls going to school. They also restricted women’s access to health care and forced them to wear clothing that covered them from head to toe in public. After the Taleban’s refusal to hand over bin Laden, the U.S. initiated aerial attacks in October, paving the way for opposition groups to drive them from power. With an interim government in place, Afghanistan has begun to build the foundations of an infrastructure; however, the lack of security, hunger and healthcare for Afghan citizens, as well as the plight of women, remain urgent concerns.

[Brief moment of silence]

Reader 5: But there is hope. In March 2002, more than 3 million children—one third of them girls—flooded the classrooms in Afghanistan. When the university in Kabul reopened, the response from the female population was overwhelming. Interim President Hamid Karzai signed a declaration of equality for the women of Afghanistan shortly after coming into power, and his cabinet includes two women.
Reader 1: Rwanda
The Rwandan genocide began during the first week of 1994. During the period known as the 100-day massacre, it is estimated that 1 million people were killed. Schools and homes were destroyed, land was left unused, and many children were left to raise their young siblings. The country has many development needs, as do the people—most of the survivors of the genocide have been left with psychological trauma that makes even daily living difficult.

[Brief moment of silence]

Reader 2: But there is hope. Reconstruction of the country has been going on for the past decade. In 1995 an international aid organization developed a counseling programs to help Rwandan genocide survivors. Today, the Association of Rwandan Counselors for Trauma, continues this work. The counselors help people to deal with the symptoms such as sleeplessness, stomach ulcers, anxiety, grief, headaches and flashbacks of events such as murder and rape.

Reader 3: South Africa
Until 1994, South Africa was ruled by a white minority which considered itself superior. The white governments had grand social engineering schemes which separated the races and involved the forced resettlement of hundreds of thousands of people. They poisoned and bombed opponents and encouraged trouble in neighboring countries. The apartheid government eventually negotiated itself out of power, and the new leadership encouraged reconciliation. But the cost of the years of conflict will continue to take their toll, not least in terms of social disruption and lost education.

[Brief moment of silence]

Reader 4: But there is hope. South Africa is one of several countries to have established truth and reconciliation commissions as a way of dealing with a violent past and of fostering a new order. Many young professionals—black and white—have made a conscious decision to stay in South Africa to help build a well-integrated society. The Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who believes that confession of sins, forgiveness and reconciliation will heal wounds. The good work of the Commission continues today.

Time of Silent Reflection (5-10minutes)

Sharing
Ask participants to share any thoughts or commentaries on the Holy Spirit, hope and their work for justice and peace.

Closing Prayer
Leader: Today we remember the first disciples as they received the Holy Spirit and were sent forth to continue the work of God. As Catholics, we are invited to recommit ourselves to welcoming God’s Spirit, who abides in us, and to be very mindful that the fruits of the Spirit were not given solely for our personal benefit but rather are to be shared with the whole human family. Help us to work together for a more just world in which the dignity of all people is respected. Help us to increase our knowledge and call for a better world for those who are held back by poverty, oppression and injustice. And help us to continue to search for signs of hope, that we might celebrate them and be inspired by them.

O Holy Spirit, Grant us Hope.

Amen.

Sources for Country Profiles:
http://www.unicef.org
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3514504.stm
http://www.batshalom.org/