PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK  Psalm 70:1-2, 4, 5

Make haste, O God, to deliver me!*  
Make haste to help / me, O Lord!  
Let them be ashamed and confounded*  
who seek my life.  
Let them be turned back and confused*  
who desire my hurt.  
Let all those who seek / You rejoice*  
and be / glad in You.  
But I am poor and needy;*  
make haste to me, O God!  
You are my help and my deliverer;*  
O Lord, do / not delay.

BLESS YOURSELF WITH THE HOLY CROSS AND SAY:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

SAY THE APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.  
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell.  
The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holly Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAY THE MORNING OR EVENING PRAYER

Morning. I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger: and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You.  
For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Evening. I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

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THEME OF THE WEEK: The Hearing and Speaking Wrought by the Spirit

Complaining runs amok among those who “err in spirit” and refuse to understand the work of the Spirit through the revealed Word of God. This complaining happens both against the ministry of the letter as well as against the ministry of the Spirit. Still, God speaks, and it is done. By the Word of Christ the deaf are made to hear and the mute are made to speak (Mark 7:37). Faith grabs hold of this Word and trusts that it is true, that it teaches us, and that it saves us. We learn doctrine and come to understand (Isaiah 29:24). The same Spirit who causes us to hear also causes us to trust that this Jesus atoned for our sins on the wood of the cross, and saves us by His grace through our faith in Him.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 7:31-37: Making us Hear and Speak
Jesus heals the lame, the blind, and the sick. He makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak. His Word that is heard also brings the faith that saves (Romans 10:17). His Spirit is not separated from His Word, but comes with His Word and brings about the glorious mystery of faith. Jesus does not heal in order to receive attention (Mark 7:36). Jesus heals so that faith would spread, so that salvation would be wrought by the Word He speaks and the Spirit He gives. This salvation comes to us at so great a cost: the body and blood of Him who died on the cross and gives His Spirit in His Word. Our ears are opened to hear His truth, and to speak His praise, to the glory of His name. Jesus, continue causing us to hear Your word and speak by Your Spirit. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 199:89-96 (LAMEDH): The Everlasting Word
The Word of the Lord is a forever Word. It does not pass away. It does not get outdated. It does not change. Both the world and man do change. Cultures shift and sway. Man is like a flower that grows and then fades away, like a sand foundation that cannot stand, nor endure. Your faithfulness endures to all generations. You established the earth, and it abides (v. 90). The Word of the Lord, whether it condemns our sins and kills our pride, or lifts us up in salvation, is our only sure and certain hope, that which we are called to love. Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction (v. 92). His precepts have given us life. Lord, keep us in the love of Your word of condemnation and Your word of forgiveness. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 3:4-11: The Life-Giving Spirit
What the letter does in condemning our sin through the ministry of death, the Spirit does in giving us life through the ministry of the New Covenant. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6). The letter kills for a good and holy reason: we must have our sin killed, our pride buried, our condemnation put to rest. We have such trust through Christ toward God (2 Corinthians 3:4). The ministry of the Spirit is more glorious. It rescues us from sin, death, and the power of the devil and makes us new men who trust in Christ and desire to do His will. The promise and fulfillment of Christ’s death on the cross has brought in the ministry of righteousness (2 Corinthians 3:9). God, kill our sins and make us alive in Your Son Jesus. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 12:31-42: Repentance through Preaching
There is power in the preaching of the Word, both because of the men who are called by God to preach, and because the Word that is preached is not the Word that originates with man, but originates and comes from God and His Spirit. The men of Nineveh were granted the authority to condemn the later generation because they repented at the preaching of Jonah (v. 41). Jonah, as did other men called to preach the word, pointed to the One greater than Himself, the Son of Man who died on the cross for all sin and forgives sins committed against Himself. Yet, the Son of Man forgives sins by the Holy Spirit. If anyone sins against the Holy Spirit, he is not forgiven (v. 32). Son of Man, keep and protect us from sinning against Your Spirit, by repentance. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: James 3:1-12: The Tongue and the Body
Who would have thought that the little member of our body, our tongue, is guilty of such great sins? The tongue determines what the body does. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body (v. 2). Yet, how often does this occur? The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature: and it is set on fire by hell (v. 6). There could be and would be no controlling and disciplining of our tongues were it not for the Spirit who abides with us through the word and faith in Jesus, the Word who became flesh and conquered all iniquity on the cross. God our Father, bridle our tongues with Your abiding Spirit. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 104: Caring for Everything
It is not an overstatement to say that the Lord cares for creation and everything in it. “He has made the clouds His chariot and He walks on the wings of the wind” (v. 3). He laid the foundations of the earth, and it is not moved forever (v. 5). The Lord our creator is the Lord our Savior, whose glory endures forever. Just as everything and everyone lives and moves and has their being because of Him, so also is it that everyone who is saved by His grace through His Spirit has the forgiveness of sins because of His death on the cross. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created: and You renew the face of the earth (v. 30). We sing our praises to God “while we have our being” (v. 33). Lord, continue upholding Your creation by Your Son. Amen.

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