

**Opening Prayer for Session Three**  
of Celebrating a Season of Hope Listening Assemblies

**Gathering Song:** All Are Welcome (verses two and five)

Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true,  
where all God's children dare to seek to dream God's reign anew.  
Here the cross shall stand as witness and as symbol of God's grace;  
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:  
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard  
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word.  
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace,  
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:  
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

**Reading:** Isaiah 43: 18-19 (Doing something new!)

**Reflection:** In this familiar passage from Isaiah, God is speaking through the prophet, reminding the people that creating something new is what God does in the present, not just long ago at Creation. As we enter our final Listening Assembly session, what is "something new" that you envision? (Pause for silent reflection)

**Reading:** (based on prayer familiarly known as "the Romero prayer", which was written by Bishop Ken Untener for Cardinal Dearden to use in November 1979)

Reader 1: It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.  
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent  
enterprise that is God's work.

Reader 2: Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom  
always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.

Reader 3: No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

Reader 4: This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.

Reader 5: We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

Reader 6: We may never see the end results,  
but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets of a future not our own.

**All: Vatican II Prayer to the Holy Spirit**

We stand before you, Holy Spirit, conscious of our limitations,  
but aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us, and enlighten our hearts.

Give us light and strength to know your will, to make it our own and to live it in our lives.

Guide us by your wisdom, support us by your power,

for you are God, sharing the glory of our Creator and Savior.

You desire justice for all, enable us to uphold the rights of others;

Do not allow us to be misled by ignorance or corrupted by fear or favor.

Unite us to yourself in the bond of love and keep us faithful to all that is true  
as we gather in your name.

May we temper justice with love, so that all our decisions may be pleasing to you and  
earn the reward you promised to good and faithful servants.

You live and reign with our Creator and our Savior, One God, forever and ever, Amen.

(Prayer composed by Pope John XXIII for Vatican II. Council Bishops prayed it at the beginning of every session)