

Reflecting
on the 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Archdiocese of
Liverpool

Prepare to be attentive to *The God Who Speaks in this story.*



- Light a candle or tea light if possible.
- Perhaps place a flower from the garden or a plant next to the light.

Let us begin our time of prayer on this Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still.

Let the music, *Do Not Be Afraid*, help you to relax. Ask for God's grace and light to fill your heart and your mind as you open to the Word.



*Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by your name; you are mine.*

When you walk through the waters, I'll be with you.
You will never sink beneath the waves.

*Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by your name; you are mine.*

You are mine, O my child, I am your Father.
And I love you with a perfect love.

*Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by your name; you are mine.*



Spend some time just looking at the three images.

- Where is your eye drawn to?
- What feelings are you experiencing?
- What are you noticing?



Pray today's Responsorial Psalm.



In your great love, answer me, O Lord.

It is for you that I suffer taunts,
that shame covers my face,
that I have become a stranger to my brothers,
an alien to my own mother's sons.
I burn with zeal for your house
and taunts against you fall on me.

In your great love, answer me, O Lord.

This is my prayer to you,
my prayer for your favour.
In your great love, answer me, O God,
with your help that never fails:
Lord, answer, for your love is kind;
in your compassion, turn towards me.

In your great love, answer me, O Lord.

The poor when they see it will be glad
and God-seeking hearts will revive;
for the Lord listens to the needy
and does not spurn his servants in their chains.
Let the heavens and the earth give him praise,
the sea and all its living creatures.

In your great love, answer me, O Lord.

Now, either read slowly to yourself this short passage from the Gospel according to Matthew or better still, read it aloud, again slowly.

From the Gospel according to Matthew 10:26-33



Jesus said 'So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.'

'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.'



'Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Spend a few moments allowing some aspect of the Gospel - a word/phrase or image - to touch you more deeply and read this part a second time, aloud if possible.

Now move on to this week's reflection by Fr Chris Thomas of The Irenaeus Project...



Just recently I met a woman who is a recovering alcoholic. She shared something of her story with me. Her name was June and she had held a very high-powered job as a senior social worker. She described the pressure that she was under to hit targets, manage staff and work transparently. Her career mattered more to her than anything else and the relationship she was in suffered and eventually broke down. Her life was spiralling out of control. What began as a reward for a hard day's work, a glass of wine, slowly took over her life. She told me that she would keep alcohol in her desk drawer just to get through the day. Eventually she was discovered and sacked. She lost her home and ended up on the streets selling herself to buy the drink her body craved. One day she was drinking cider in Piccadilly, London, when a former client recognised her. June had been very good to this woman when she was in need and the woman remembered. She took her home with her and allowed her to stay for nearly two years until June was able to get herself somewhere to live and maintain it.

June was amazed at her kindness and it turned her world around. She was filled with hope that life could be different. She went along to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, which she said was the hardest thing she had ever had to do. It took several years before she managed to hand things over to a higher power. When she did, she found a hope within her that had never left her. It was a hope in the God she had discovered. Hope became a reality in her as it has to in all of us particularly at this time. That woman's action in rescuing June was for me a real image of who God is, a God who is love and compassion and mercy, a God

whose justice is to give us what we don't really deserve, love and more love, a God who is willing to go to any lengths for us. It also reminded me that each of us is called to be like that woman and to be willing to proclaim the Good News whatever the cost may be to ourselves.

When you read Matthew's Gospel, you discover in it an invitation to radically follow Jesus because of love. It is in this Gospel that we have the beatitudes and the invitation not to judge, but to love our enemies and do good to those who hurt us. These are hugely radical demands. Then in chapter 10 of the Gospel Jesus sends out the 72 to preach and teach this way of living, reminding them that as they do this there might well be some persecution. It is in this context that Matthew has Jesus say to the disciples, not to be afraid because every hair on their heads has been counted and they are worth more than hundreds of sparrows. It is Matthew's reminder to the disciples, and therefore to each one of us, that there is no need to be afraid of anything because of God's loving intimate care of us.

I think it's so hard for most of us to believe in a God whose justice is in fact unconditional love. We're much more comfortable with an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, much more comfortable with having to earn love. We don't know what to do with a God who breaks the rules and loves everyone without exception. We certainly don't know what to do with the invitation for us to do the same for others. Matthew's Jesus invites us to open our hearts to this God and then to follow, knowing that we can trust God with our lives, whatever may be thrown at us. If God has counted every hair on our heads, as the Gospel told us, then surely we can dare to believe that God will always be there for us in the midst of our fear and anxiety, giving us strength to

live the radical call to follow. There is no need to be afraid of that call and where it may lead us. We are loved beyond our wildest imaginings by God. We are worth more than hundreds of sparrows.

Take a few moments to receive and reflect on this poem, *Let Your God Love You*, by Edwina Gateley.



Be silent.
Be still.
Alone.
Empty
Before your God.
Say nothing.
Ask nothing.
Be silent.
Be still.
Let your God look upon you.
That is all.
God knows.
God understands.
God loves you
With an enormous love,
And only wants
To look upon you
With that love.
Quiet.
Still.
Be.
Let your God-
Love you.



As a result of your reflection, offer some prayers of intercession for the people and situations in our world today that seem to you to be most in need.

Let's begin with the prayer Archbishop Malcolm has asked us to pray at this time and then you may like to include one or more of prayers that follow and/or add your own:



God Our Father,
each person is precious to You.
You are the Giver of life.
Have mercy on us and protect us at this time,
as the coronavirus threatens health and life.
You are an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.
Watch over those who are suffering,
give strength to those who are aiding the sick
and give courage to all in this time of anxiety.
We ask this of you in the name of your Son.
Jesus Christ.
Amen.

We pray for Pope Francis and all who serve as ministers of the Gospel ... that they may be effective witnesses to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

We pray for new efforts to ensure an end to racial injustice throughout our global family... may we do all we can to ensure that every human person is treated with dignity and respect and has equal opportunities to grow and flourish within their community.

We pray for all who care for the sick and dying, the elderly and the vulnerable ... may they have the resources they need to be able to fulfil their role with kindness and compassion and be sustained in their efforts to bring healing and comfort to those entrusted to their care.

We pray for the work of our diocesan Synod ... that our community will wisely discern where the Holy Spirit is leading us during the coming months.

We pray now in the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

To end your time of reflection, listen to *O God, You Search Me.*



O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down, you are before me,
Ever the maker and keeper of my days.

You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar,
And with love everlasting you besiege me:
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are.

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
You have known its meaning through and through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future too.

Although your Spirit is upon me,
Still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

For you created me and shaped me,
Gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:
Safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down, you are before me,
Ever the maker and keeper of my days.

Acknowledgements

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