

Reflecting
on the Sixth Sunday of Easter



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



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

Begin by praying this prayer requested by Archbishop Malcolm:



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.

Now, breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still.

Let the music, *Called beyond ourselves*, help you to relax. Ask for God's grace and light to fill your heart and your mind as you open to the Word.



We are called beyond ourselves to serve one another.
We are called beyond ourselves to the living Christ.



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 the Responsorial Psalm *Let all the earth cry out.*



Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Cry out with joy to God all the earth,
O sing to the glory of his name.
O render him glorious praise.
Say to God: 'How tremendous your deeds!

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

He turned the sea into dry land,
they passed through the river dry-shod.
Let our joy then be in him;
he rules evermore by his might.

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Now, either read slowly to yourself the story below or better still, read it aloud, again slowly.

From the Gospel according to John 14:15 – 21



If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.



I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Now revisit the part of the story that seems to be most important for you.

Read this part a second time, aloud if possible, and allow it to nourish you before reading Fr Chris Thomas' reflection...



My Dad was the youngest of four brothers, the eldest of whom was born in the nineteenth century and died in the First World War. All my cousins on my Dad's side are much older than me and as a child I always felt very insignificant and very frightened when I had to go to either of his two remaining brother's houses. I do

not know whether you can imagine what it was like to be four or five and to be surrounded by adults, none of whom were particularly good with children. I used to spend most of my time in silence crouched on the floor ready to run for cover behind the sofa whenever I was noticed. It was agony. To help me get through it, I invented a friend called Billy who only ever came out when I went to my uncle's houses. He was the brave one who would speak for me when I couldn't or would play with me when I felt alone. The reality was that Billy was simply part of me but a part of me that enabled me to cope in a lonely frightening situation. I guess most of us have strategies to deal with the times when we feel most alone, strategies to deal with our fear. In today's Gospel we find Jesus telling his disciples that their greatest strategy is to trust in his presence. The Advocate he tells them will come to be with them. In Greek the word we translate as Advocate is Paraclete. Paraclete was one who stood by the little person who was unable to speak for themselves, the one who was powerless and voiceless. The Paraclete fought their case in a court of law. The disciples were going to be those little ones and the Spirit of Jesus would be the Paraclete, to be with them and to help them as they face the world.

What's Jesus saying to us? It is really very simple. We are never alone because he is with us. Whenever we have to face difficult times, whenever we feel alone or afraid, believe the truth that his Spirit is within us. We are incredibly special people. God loves us enough to enter into real intimacy with us. That is why Jesus reminds us that he becomes part of us, and we part of him. It is the coming together of the human and the divine. It is what our Baptism and Confirmation tells us is true, that God is within us. We do not have to look outside ourselves for strength, the Spirit is present and

if, in our times of crisis, we can only spend a moment drawing on the strength that comes from the Spirit, I think we would be amazed at how real that Spirit is. I guess that is why I find some religious practices difficult to handle because they can point us away from the mystery of the God who has chosen to live within our hearts. God has given us all we need to journey through life and lives within us.

I don't know about you but whenever I am faced with difficult times, I look to God to change the things that I find difficult. I suppose it is a natural response. I think the reality is that the Spirit within will change us and strengthen us, so that we can cope with difficult situations. The situation may never change but we do and the strength is somehow given. In just a couple of weeks we will celebrate Pentecost. Maybe we could pray that we would become aware of the presence of the Advocate within us, so that when we come to celebrate that feast, it won't be empty ritual but a real celebration of the gift of the God, who promises to be with us always.

Read through the poem, written for Eastertide, by Helen Jones (Pastoral Associate within Liverpool South Pastoral Area).



Christ in every laboured breath
Christ in hands that heal
Christ in the tears we shed
Christ in words of comfort said

Christ in our helplessness
Christ in the heart of the volunteer
Christ in our loneliness
Christ in the ears of those who hear

Christ in our isolation
Christ in bonds of family
Christ in our fears left unsaid
Christ in prayers offered humbly

Christ in the hope we know
Christ was, and is, and ever will be so.
Christ is risen
Christ is risen indeed!



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. You may like to include one or more of the following:



We pray for Pope Francis ... our inspiring leader through these challenging days ... and for our Archbishop, Malcolm, for all our bishops, priests and deacons and the many lay people ministering within our communities at this time ... that they be blessed with strength and courage to meet the new demands presented by COVID-19.

We pray for all who care for the sick and dying, the elderly and the vulnerable ... may they be encouraged and sustained by your love and the prayer of our communities.

We pray for all who are dying or have recently been diagnosed with a terminal illness ... give them courage for the journey which lies ahead of them and reassurance that your love will always be with them.

We pray for all scientists especially those whose work is enabling a more comprehensive response to the global pandemic ... may their primary concern be the healing of all humanity in accordance with God's plan.

As we enter the Month of Mary we respond to Pope Francis's call to ask her intercession as we pray: Hail Mary ...

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 *Alleluia!*
*Sing to Jesus.***



Alleluia! Sing to Jesus;
His the sceptre, His the throne.
Alleluia! His the triumph,
His the victory alone.
Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion
thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of ev'ry nation
hath redeemed us by His blood.

Alleluia! Not as orphans
are we left in sorrow now.
Alleluia! He is near us;
faith believes, nor questions how.
Though the cloud from sight received Him
when the forty days were o'er,
shall our hearts forget His promise,
"I am with you evermore"?

Alleluia! Bread of angels,
now on earth our food, our stay.
Alleluia! Here the sinful
flee to thee from day to day.
Intercessor, Friend of sinners,
Earth's Redeemer, plead for me
where the songs of all the sinless
sweep across the crystal sea.

Alleluia, King eternal,
He the Lord of lords we own;
Alleluia, born of Mary,
Earth thy footstool, heav'n thy throne;
Now within the veil has entered
Robed in flesh, our great High Priest
Now on Earth both priest and victim
in the Eucharistic Feast.

Acknowledgements

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