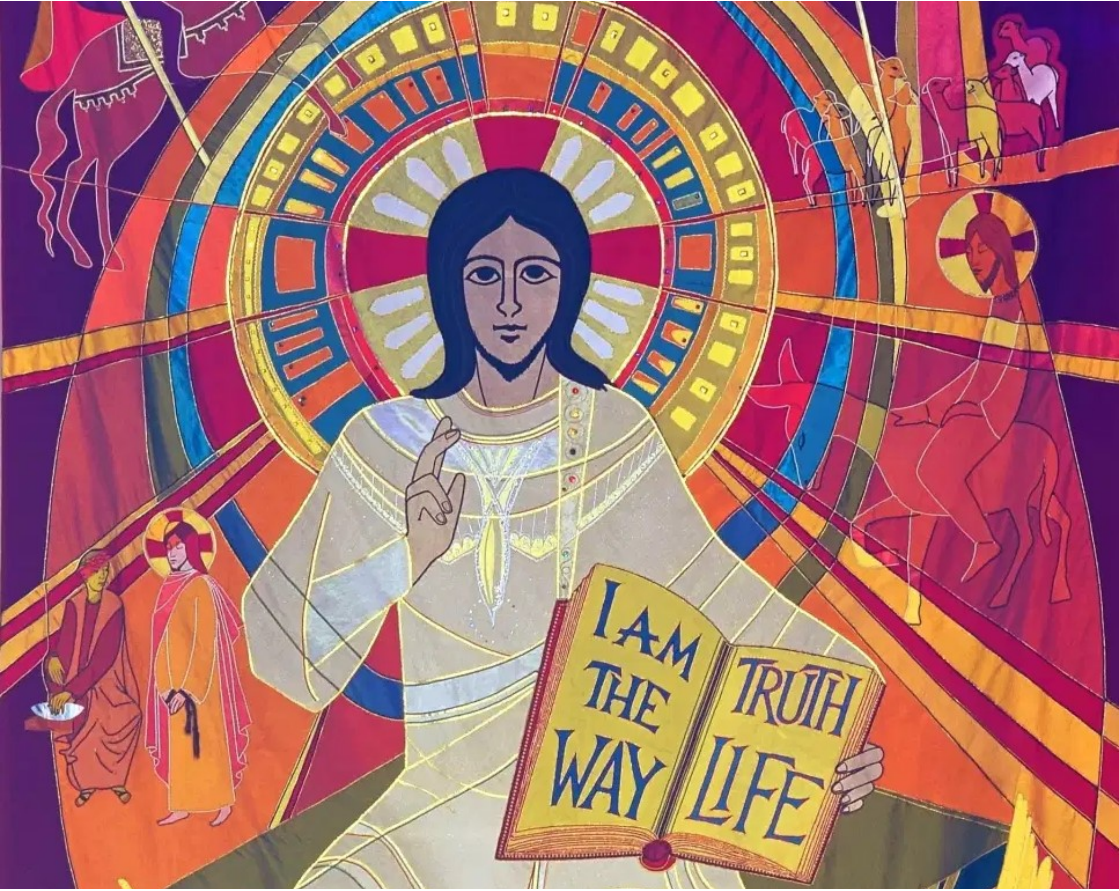


Reflecting  
**on the Fifth Sunday of Easter**



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 daffodils, 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.



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 *May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you.***



*May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you.*

Ring out your joy to the Lord, O you just;  
for praise is fitting for loyal hearts.  
Give thanks to the Lord upon the harp,  
with a ten-stringed lute sing him songs.

*May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you.*

For the word of the Lord is faithful  
and all his works to be trusted.  
The Lord loves justice and right  
and fills the earth with his love.

*May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you.*

The Lord looks on those who revere him,  
on those who hope in his love,  
to rescue their souls from death,  
to keep them alive in famine.

*May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you.*



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

*From the Gospel according to John 14:1 – 12*



'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.'

Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?'



Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.'

Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.

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...**



Many years ago, I met a blind woman living in a parish in the centre of Liverpool. When I visited her, she told me how she had lost her sight and how often people pitied her because of it. She went on to tell me that she felt sorrier for them for not realising that she could see at a level that many others could not, and she understood that level to be far more important. I often think of that encounter when I read John's Gospel because we are being invited to see at a much deeper level. We are being invited to see at a level that gives life deep within and the question that matters more than anything when we realise that is, can you trust God? You see that is what Ronald Rolheiser calls the acid test of faith. Can you trust this being that we call God? We can know all there is to know about religion

and never learn the lesson of trust, never enter into a faith relationship with the Lord. Religion is all about observance and practice. It is about rules and regulations. It is about knowledge and dogma and doctrine all of which are fine but are never enough.

Faith is about relationship, real life-giving relationship. It is about that simple trusting and moving with the prompting of the Spirit. It is about falling in love and living in love. It is only with that sort of relationship with God that we ever learn how to trust God. John's Gospel is all about the ebb and flow of relationship. You find Jesus using beautifully poetic language to express the life between himself and the Father, and himself and the believer. All the time the reader is being invited to enter into the same sort of relationship with the Father and with one another that Jesus has, that relationship of trust and deep inner life, which lets us know the living God. In the Gospel today we have Jesus saying to us 'trust in God still and trust in me.' That is sometimes a scary place to be because it does not promise anything. It does not promise that everything will turn out fine or that we will get what we want. It does not say that there will be a crock of gold at the end of the rainbow or that every cloud has a silver lining. Then we find him saying, 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' Again, it promises little other than an invitation to enter into relationship and to encounter the mystery of the God Jesus knew.

A friend of mine said that when she began to take God seriously, she thought everything in her life would be fine and when she found it wasn't, she felt conned. The only guarantee God gives us about life is that somehow God will be there in the mess. Don't escape into false religion that gives platitudes for answers but really helps no-one. Don't use God as a shield from the

pain and heartache of life. Enter into whatever life throws at you and trust that God will be there. When everything within us rails against what is happening in our lives - bereavement, unemployment and broken relationships, when our world is falling apart and we seem to be sliding into the pit of darkness, the challenge is, will you trust God and believe that God will be present and that simply because of God's presence all will be well?

That is what Jesus had to do as he hung on the cross. He had to trust God in his darkest moment, and it was that trust in God that led him through death and into life. That is the invitation each of us is given during this Eastertide, to open our hearts and minds to the risen Lord, to learn how to trust in God and to find life in all its fullness.



### **Read through the blessing that follows by John O'Donohue.**

When the light lessens,  
Causing colours to lose their courage,  
And your eyes fix on the empty distance  
That can open on either side  
Of the surest line  
To make all that is  
Familiar and near  
Seem suddenly foreign,

When the music of talk  
Breaks apart into noise  
And you hear your heart louden  
While the voices around you  
Slow down to leaden echoes  
Turning silence  
Into something stony and cold,



When the old ghosts come back  
To feed on everywhere you felt sure,  
Do not strengthen their hunger  
By choosing fear;  
Rather, decide to call on your heart  
That it may grow clear and free  
To welcome home your emptiness  
That it may cleanse you  
Like the clearest air  
You could ever breathe.

Allow your loneliness time  
To dissolve the shell of dross  
That had closed around you;  
Choose in this severe silence  
To hear the one true voice  
Your rushed life fears;  
Cradle yourself like a child  
Learning to trust what emerges,  
So that gradually  
You may come to know

That deep in that black hole  
You will find the blue flower  
That holds the mystical light  
Which will illuminate in you  
The glimmer of springtime.



**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 those who are experiencing loneliness that within the silence of that place they may 'hear the one true voice' of Jesus – the Way, the Truth and the Life.

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 *Do not let your hearts be troubled.***



*Do not let your hearts be troubled  
Have faith in God and faith in me  
I will go forth to prepare a place for you  
And I'll come back to take you with me  
That where I am you may also be*

In God's house there are many places for you alone to dwell in safety  
You know the way to where I lead you  
If you are lost, I will show the way

*Do not let your hearts be troubled  
Have faith in God and faith in me  
I will go forth to prepare a place for you  
And I'll come back to take you with me  
That where I am you may also be*

I am the way, the truth and the life  
Only through me can you know what I know  
If you knew me you would see the vision  
If you see me you see your God

*Do not let your hearts be troubled  
Have faith in God and faith in me  
I will go forth to prepare a place for you  
And I'll come back to take you with me  
That where I am you may also be*

The words I speak are not only of myself  
It is your God who lives within me  
If you believe that your God and I are one  
I will provide when you call my name

*Do not let your hearts be troubled  
Have faith in God and faith in me  
I will go forth to prepare a place for you  
And I'll come back to take you with me  
That where I am you may also be*

## **Acknowledgements**

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Responsorial Psalm:

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