

Reflecting
on the Second 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, *If You Believe*, help you to relax.



If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, He sent His only son to live and die, to
live and die.

If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, He died to save us all - for you and me,
for you and me.
If you believe .
If you believe.

If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, He died and rose again to give new life,
to give new life.

If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, then God will set you free.
If you believe, His Holy Spirit rests in you and me, in
you and me.

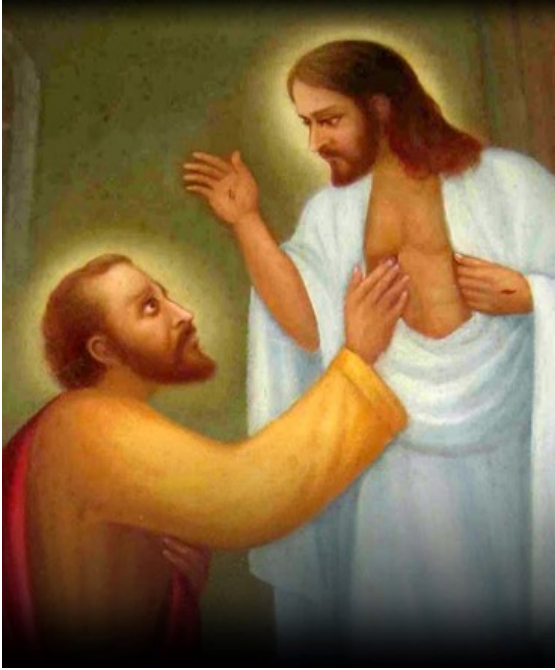
If you believe.
If you believe.
If you believe.

Ask for God's grace and light to fill your heart and your
mind as you open to the Word.



**Spend some time just looking at the three
images.**

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



As today is within the octave of Easter we have a Sequence. Pray this now using the music provided.



To the Paschal Victim, give thankful praise!
Christ, ever sinless, his sheep now he saves.
Death and life contended in dreadful strife;
Death did not hold him, immortal his life.

**Alleluia, His triumph we sing!
Christ is arisen, the Victor, the King!**

Mary, speak, confessing what you have seen.
"Christ's tomb lies empty, where once He had been;
Angels bright, confirming; shroud laid aside;
He goes to Galilee, he lives though He died."

**Alleluia, His triumph we sing!
Christ is arisen, the Victor, the King!**

Christians, sing his glory with ev'ry breath;
Sing of his kingdom, victorious o'er death!
Jesus, grant us mercy: new life from heav'n!
Christ ever reigns! Alleluia! Amen!

**Alleluia, His triumph we sing!
Christ is arisen, the Victor, the King!**

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

From the Gospel according to John 20:19-31



When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."



Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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 watched a programme on one of the famines in Ethiopia. At the end of the programme the film focused on a baby dying in his mother's arms and the commentator said that the child symbolised all that was wrong in the world. It was a harrowing image that has stayed with me for many years, a stark symbol of all the pain and greed around us.

Symbols are always powerful. They touch our hearts and stay with us for a long time, challenging the misconceptions so many of us have about life and I guess that's why John in his Gospel uses so many symbols to open our hearts to truth.

Throughout the Gospel we have people who symbolise the whole of humanity. Remember when Jesus was brought out before the crowds and Pilate said, 'Behold the man,' a symbol of suffering humanity. Think of the number of times in the Gospel when Mary moves from being 'mother' to 'woman.' Remember Peter, who often symbolises the Church, the church who won't allow the Lord to serve it or the Church who often fails to be what it's called to be. Today we have Thomas, the man of faith who symbolises all who journey in faith and who get to the place where they are able to look at Jesus and say 'My Lord and my God.'

One of the interesting points to note about the passage is that Jesus takes the initiative. People often talk to me about what they can do for God. They speak of how often they should pray, how much they have to love others, how they have to say their night prayer and their morning prayer, this novena or that novena, get to Mass, do this or that.

These are all good things to do but it seems to me that we often get the emphasis wrong. You see, it's not what we can do for God but what God can do for us. It's God who takes the initiative. It's God who invites us to discover what it means to be human. It's God who created us to love and to live. It's God who calls us into intimacy and so Thomas stands before Jesus in the Gospel today and Jesus says 'Put your hands into my side and your finger into my wounds. Become one with me, discover that my way is your way, my journey yours, a way that leads to life.'

How much more intimate can you get, to touch the wounded broken body of the Lord? It's something you and I are asked to do every day. We are to touch the broken body of the Lord within ourselves and within others, to enter into intimacy with the Lord through those who are desperate and needy. It's an invitation to look at ourselves and at them and say 'My Lord and My God'. It's a call to walk the journey, a journey that has wounds and brokenness and vulnerability. There is no escaping from it. It's a journey that leads to Calvary, yes, but a journey on which we constantly rise from our wounds and brokenness and find new life emerging from the pain of death.

It seems to me that one of the calls of the Gospel is to be intimate with brokenness, and recognise in it the Jesus who came to bring life. We are not to run away from it, as so many of us do losing ourselves in trivia and saying that's what faith is about, but to be like Thomas who touched the broken Lord and said 'My Lord and my God'.



Read through the poem written by Rev Ben Gosden in 2013.

Holiness of Doubt

Lord, forgive.
Forgive when I think I have you all figured out;
when I mistake certainty for faith;
doubt for sin.

Mystery is the very fragrance of life with you -
enfolding
surrounding
evading.

Wonderful are the days
when belief takes the form of proof.
Wonderful, too, are the days when
form is fleeting,
chaos,
and faith is all we have to cling to.



Life is found in the in-between:
proof and mystery
form and chaos
belief and doubt.

O God,
Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe
Blessed, too, are those who still doubt...
and yet long for more.

**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... that he remains safe and well in order to continue his ministry of service to the world at this time.

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 grieving at this time and for all who suffer from anxiety and depression as a result of our current crisis... that just as Thomas did, they may see you and know you are with them at this time.

We pray for ourselves and our loved ones ... in these days when touch is so restricted may we all come closer to the deep intimacy with you which Thomas experienced.

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 *Praise my soul the King of Heaven*.



Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven;
To his feet your tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like me his praise should sing.
Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise
the everlasting King!

Praise him for his grace and favour
To our fathers in distress.
Praise him, still the same forever,
Slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Glorious
in his faithfulness!

Father-like he tends and spares us;
Well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hands he gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him!
Widely as his mercy flows!

Angels, help us to adore him;
Ye behold him face to face.
Sun and moon, bow down before him,
Dwellers all in time and space.
Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace!

Acknowledgements

Cover image: stock photo - Ávila, Spain, April - 18, 2016: "La duda de Santo Tomas - The Doubt of St Thomas" painting on the wood in Catedral de Cristo Salvador by unknown artist of 15th century.

If You Believe (then God will set you free).
Text and music © Joanne Wallace 2016.

Easter Sequence: Christ is Arisen!
Text: Based on the Sequence for Easter (Victimae paschali laudes);
Randall DeBruyn.
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