

Reflecting  
**on the Seventh 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 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 *The Goodness of the Lord.*



*I believe, I believe I shall see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land, in the land of the living.*

The Lord is my light,  
The Lord is my rock, my salvation.  
The Lord is my refuge, guarding my life;  
Of whom should I be afraid?

*I believe, I believe I shall see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land, in the land of the living.*

Only one thing I ask:  
May I live in the house of my Lord.  
I shall gaze on God's goodness all of my days;  
I shall live in the shelter of God.

*I believe, I believe I shall see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land, in the land of the living.*

I believe I shall see the goodness of God in the land of  
the living.  
Be strong, wait for the Lord.

*I believe, I believe I shall see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land, in the land of the living.*

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

*From the Gospel according to John 17:20 – 26*



I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of  
those who will believe in me through their word, that  
they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am

in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.



Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in 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...**



A couple of years ago, I was invited to go and lead a retreat for a group of sisters. The highlight of the week for me was a conversation I had with a 95-year-old who had been with her order for 77 years. She was as bright as a button with an outlook on life and the Church that belied her years. She told me that she had been a teacher and eventually a head mistress of a girls' school. When she retired from school, she moved into parish ministry and from there had opened a drop-in centre for those living with HIV/Aids, so her life had been full and varied. A couple of years before I met her, she had retired from the centre and the parish and now occupied herself by helping to teach English to asylum seekers. She was a great woman whose constant activity had kept her mind alert. She was witty and an absolute delight to be with. As you can imagine the conversation took some time and as it drew to an end, she finally told me why she had come to see me. She hadn't wanted to come on the retreat, but it was an expectation within her order that a retreat would be made every year. Then she began to cry and took hold of my hand and said to me 'You see, I never knew'. It took a while to get it out of her but eventually I discovered that it was all to do with the love of God and her lack of awareness that she was a beloved child of God. It had taken 77 years of a committed religious life for her to suddenly realise that she was loved by God. Her tears were tears of joy and as she left, she said to me, 'All I will do for the rest of my life is say thank you'.

The farewell speeches of great men often ended with a prayer of protection for their followers and for their

teaching to be lived out in them. This is what is happening in this part of John's Gospel. In it, Jesus pulls together all the strands of his life, as he tries to show all that he's believed in and all that he's held important that he wants us to hold on to as well. A little further on in this chapter he will pray for unity. However, at this point Jesus is inviting us to focus on the wonder and beauty of the relationship we are called into with God and with one another. So we find John telling us today, as he often has through the Gospel, that real life only comes through knowing Jesus in the intimate way that the word 'knowing' meant for the Hebrews. It's all about relationship. Much of the latter half of John's Gospel goes round and round in circles as the author tries to communicate the power of relationship. It uses beautiful words and phrases when reflecting on God's love and the lavishness of that love poured out on the world and on humanity.

John seems to want us to know that when we understand that love, then in time we come to recognise that we are cherished by God with that intimate, wonderful, relationship that many parents have with their children. I came across this quotation from Ronald Rolheiser. He said when reflecting on the relationship between God and God's children, 'God, like any parent, takes a huge risk in having children. To have children is to leave yourself painfully vulnerable. It is also to be called upon for an understanding, a patience, and a self-dethroning that, literally, can empty you of self. That is as true of God as of any mother or father.'

God's love for us has made God vulnerable and needy. It's hard for us to image God in that way, but that's how great God's love is for each one of us. God has emptied Godself for the sake of each human being, whom God loves as if they were the only one. What incredible love that is! We are the recipients of a

generous self-giving love that God has for those who have been created. I remember recently going to see a young woman who had given birth to a baby girl. I asked her how she felt, and she said to me 'Everything I have has now been given to another. My life isn't my own any longer.' Everything God has, has been given to us. God's life is no longer God's own. It is an extremely powerful truth. How can we not have value and worth when we are loved in that way? If only we would believe that life, real life and not just existence, comes through knowing Jesus and, that if we allow God to possess us and envelop us, then we can find life, love and peace. That leads us to live in what John calls the glory of God. So spend time each day inviting God to draw you deeply into relationship and begin to live.

### **Read through the poem, written by Evangeline Paterson.**



And That Will Be Heaven

and that will be heaven  
at last... the first unclouded  
seeing

...to stand like the sunflower  
turned full face to the sun... drenched  
with light... in the still centre  
held... while the circling planets  
hum with an utter joy

...seeing and knowing  
at last... in every particle  
seen and known... and not turning  
away

...never turning away  
again



**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 grieving at this time ... that they may be comforted and find support in the prayer of the community.

We pray for all who have now returned to work ... may they feel safe and valued in the workplace and soon be confident in new working practices.

We pray for teachers and all school staff as they prepare new spaces within their classrooms which can provide a safe but effective learning environment for those in their care. Gift them with your spirit of peace and courage at this time.

We remember especially, Bishop Vincent Malone who died on 18 May. We give thanks for his faithful service to our diocese and the Church in England and Wales and pray that he will now enter into the deepest love of God.

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 *Lord Enthroned in Heav'nly Splendour.***



Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour,  
Glorious first-born from the dead,  
you alone, our strong defender,  
lifting up your people's head:  
Alleluia, alleluia,  
Jesus, true and living bread!

Prince of life, for us now living,  
By your body souls are healed;  
Prince of peace, your pardon giving,  
By your blood our peace is sealed:  
Alleluia, alleluia,  
Word of God in flesh revealed.

Paschal Lamb, your offering finished  
once for all when you were slain;  
in its fullness undiminished  
shall forevermore remain:  
Alleluia, alleluia,  
cleansing souls from ev'ry stain.

Great High Priest of our profession,  
Through the veil you entered in,  
By your mighty intercession  
Grace and mercy there to win:  
Alleluia, alleluia,  
Only sacrifice for sin.

Life-imparting heavenly Manna,  
stricken rock, with streaming side;  
heav'n and earth with loud hosanna  
worship you, the Lamb who died:  
Alleluia, alleluia,  
ris'n, ascended, glorified!

### **Acknowledgements**

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Responsorial Psalm: The Goodness of the Lord: Scott Soper © 1993, OCP Publications.

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