

Reflecting
on the 22nd 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 for the Twenty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still.

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



Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art -
Thou my best thought in the day and the night;
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my great Father; and I thy true son
Thou in me dwelling and I with thee one.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my armour and be thou my might;
thou my soul's shelter, and thy my high tower:
Raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my pow'r.



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 for today.



*My soul is thirsting, my soul is thirsting,
My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.*

O God, you are my God whom I seek;
O God, you are my God whom I seek;
For you my flesh pines, my soul thirsts
Like the earth, parched, lifeless, without water.

*My soul is thirsting, my soul is thirsting,
My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.*

Thus have I gazed
Toward You in your holy place
To see your power and your glory,
your kindness is a greater good than life itself;
My lips will glorify you.

*My soul is thirsting, my soul is thirsting,
My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.*

Thus will I bless you while I live;
Lifting up my hands,
I will call upon your name
as with a banquet
Shall my soul be satisfied,
with exultant lips
My mouth shall praise you.

*My soul is thirsting, my soul is thirsting,
My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.*

For you have been my help,
You have been my help;
In the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.
My soul clings fast to you;
your right hand holds me firm.
In the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.

*My soul is thirsting, my soul is thirsting,
My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.*

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

From the Gospel according to Matthew 16:21-27



From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

'For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done.'

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.

The reflection on the Gospel is provided by Fr Chris Thomas, Director of the Irenaeus Project.



One of the freest people I have ever met is Edwina Gately. For those of you who have never encountered her, she's a poet, theologian, artist, writer, and lay minister. She has been described as a modern-day mystic and prophet. Edwina came to Southport to speak at one of our conferences several years ago. She was a great communicator but, as she shared her stories about her life's experience, I realised that I was in the presence of someone very special. She oozed the essence of humanity with her compassion and her understanding. Full of humour and sensitivity, she had no time for the trammels of life and simply responded to where she felt God was leading her; and God has definitely led her.

From Lancaster, she found herself teaching in Africa and then started the Volunteer Missionary Movement. She then spent time reflecting and praying in the Sahara desert. She then went to the USA where she worked with street people and women in prostitution. She has a very simple and profound message that God is with us and particularly to be found in those who are in need. As I spent time with her, I found myself both fascinated and challenged by her freedom. I think too, that I became aware that her freedom to listen to God and to respond to God had cost her a great deal. She has suffered in her following of the promptings of the Spirit. She has been misunderstood and, at times, scapegoated by others who do not quite understand. Still she ploughs on, relentless in her desire to respond to the Gospel.

Listening to Edwina reminded me that the gospel cannot be forced into the parameters that we want it to fit into and sometimes we have to take risks to proclaim the Good News and often what we do won't be seen as acceptable or even orthodox, but whose approval are we looking for?

In last week's Gospel Matthew told us of Peter's confession of faith. Today we find Jesus begins to spell out what it means to be a disciple and it's a hard message to take. The son of man was destined to suffer. If you're going to say that Jesus is the Christ and walk in his way, then you'll discover that real life only comes through suffering. Peter can't accept that's God's way and so Jesus says to him, 'Get behind me Satan'. In other words it's a con to believe anything else. Life comes through death. What's Jesus saying to us? I think he's saying don't run away from the pain of the world. Enter into it. To walk the Jesus way means we have to take on the pain of others and not simply salve our consciences by putting a few pence in a collection or taking the moral high ground on particular issues.

We're to face the pain and take it on and somehow in the doing of that transform it into life. We're to do the same with our own pain. Don't run away from it, discover what it means. The hardest times in my life have also been the most life-giving times as I've tried to discover what my pain was telling me. Don't try and protect yourself from hurt. Don't put up the barriers against love which always hurts at some point, and yet most of us do.

The truth is that if we try to protect ourselves, if we try to keep in control, then we will lose our lives because that keeping in control is not life. What drives us out of fear and grows out of insecurity and keeps us independent and untouchable is shielding us from life. The only way to enter into life is to enter it through death.

You've got to let yourself be vulnerable. You've got to let yourself be weak. You've got to let yourself be touched and broken. Otherwise those words will simply remain poetry or philosophy.

That's the example of Jesus. Not just when he was hanging on the cross but every moment of his life. It cost Jesus to heal the sick. It cost him emotionally and physically. It cost Jesus not to give in to his own needs and desires. It cost him to deal with his own pain and hurt but he did it so we would know the truth that from each death comes life. If we gather here today and say as Peter said, 'You are the Christ', let's do it knowing that it means we walk the real journey of life. That it's costly but it is life giving.

Take a few moments to receive and reflect on this prayer poem, adapted from a Prayer of Consecration by Ruth Burgess in Fire and Bread.



Take my feet
from the safety of the shallows
out into the challenge of unexplored depths.

Take my heart
from the sterility of selfish preoccupations
to the fruitfulness of wounded love.

Take my mind
from the narrowness of human thought
to the expansiveness of divine insight.

Take my hands
from the poverty of having and keeping
to the riches of giving and sharing.

Take my voice
from the blandness of safe religion
to the proclamation of your radical Kingdom

Take my life
from safety to risk
from coldness to love
from darkness to light
from selfishness to sharing
from silence to proclamation.

Take my life for your Kingdom!

**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 all who are concerned to protect the environment in this special month of *Creation Time* when we remember that God has given us this beautiful world to care for, to share with all creatures and to look after for future generations.

We pray that the gifts we have may become the riches we give so that your love goes round to all people and all of creation.

We pray for our parish communities that we may be filled with awe and contemplation, and discover the worth of each thing, however small ... may we see the beauty in all people and be centres of welcome and hospitality for all.

We pray for all those who are close to death and those who have recently died ... may they know the eternal 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 *Take up your cross.*



*Take up your cross
Take up your cross
Take up your cross and follow me*

Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself
Whoever wishes to come after me must take up his
cross and follow me

Take up your cross
Take up your cross
Take up your cross and follow me

Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it
Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it

Take up your cross
Take up your cross
Take up your cross and follow me

Why gain the whole world but lose your soul?
Why gain the whole world but lose your soul?

Take up your cross
Take up your cross
Take up your cross and follow me

Acknowledgements

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Be thou my vision: Text: Irish (c.8th century) trans. Mary Byrne (1880-1931) and Eleanor Hull (1860-1935) Music: traditional Irish melody.

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