The Still Point
A Time of Meditation and Reflection
The Seventh Sunday of Easter:
The Sunday after the Ascension

... At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
   Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance...

T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

Peace on each one who comes in need;
**Peace on each one who comes in joy.**
Peace on each one who offers prayers;
**Peace on each one who offers song.**
Peace of the Maker, Peace of the Son,
**Peace of the Spirit, the Triune One.**

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Opening Prayer

The heavens are open wide
since Jesus our brother, our Redeemer,
has entered through the veil.
We thank you for his new and living way,
by which we join the unnumbered millions
who are with you forever.
Praise to you our God; you answer prayer.
**Amen.**

**The Gospel**  
*John 17:1-11*

Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.
“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.”

Poem: *Argyle on Knocknagaroon*  
by Thomas P. Lynch

Because he barely heard the voice of God  
above the hum of other choristers—  
batwing and bird-whistle, gathering thunder,  
the hiss of tides retreating, children, cattle;  
because he could not readily discern  
the plan Whoever Is In Charge Here has,  
he wondered about those who claimed to have  
blessed assurances or certainty:  
a One and Only Way and Truth and Life,  
as if Whatever Breathes in Everything  
mightn’t speak in every wondrous tongue;  
as if, of all creations, only one  
made any sense. It made no sense to him.  
Hunger he understood, touch, desire.  
He knew the tenderness humans could do,  
no less brutalities. He knew the cold  
morning, the broad meadow, the gold sunset.
One evening on the hill of Knocknagaroon,
the Atlantic on one side, the Shannon
on the other, the narrowing headlands
of the peninsula out behind him,
the broad green palm of Moveen before him,
it seemed he occupied the hand of God:
open, upturned, outstretched, uplifting him.

Meditation
Perhaps this portion of John’s gospel happened like this: speaking prophetically, the community of early Christians who gathered around the John beloved disciple – and possibly Mary of Magdala, the first witness to the renewed life of Jesus – spoke beyond what they could know from their own experience. In ecstatic language that does not yield particularly well to rational analysis, Jesus speaks of his union with the God he calls Father. The mystery of the Ascension, when we can get beyond the challenge of its seeming to be fixed in time and space, speaks of the re-union of Jesus with the Holy One. In the same way, the poet is suddenly transported beyond the moment by a sense of being lifted up into the embrace of the God.

Reflection
The last two lines of the poem could form a portion of the story of the Ascension, if we told it in another way, in another time, on another hill. What happens for you, if you read the poem as if it were about the earthly life and ministry of Jesus, and his “return to heaven” in the Ascension? What happens if you reverse the process, and bring the person you come to know in the poem back into the prayer and meditation of Jesus you hear in the gospel?

Have you had an experience like that of the man in the poem? If so, return to that moment and see what gifts it holds for you in these times. If not, what gift is there for you, in these times, if you imagine being held in the hand of God?

Prayers
We bring before God someone whom we have met or remembered today
We bring to God someone who is hurting tonight and needs our prayer
We bring to God a troubled situation in our world
We bring to God, silently, someone whom we find hard to forgive or trust.

We bring ourselves to God that we might grow in generosity of spirit, clarity of mind, and warmth of affection.

We offer our thanks to God for the blessings in our lives.

We name before God those who have died.

Gracious God, you hear all our prayers: those we speak aloud, those we hold in our hearts, and those prayers for which we have no words. Hear the prayers of your people, and grant them as may be best for us, for the sake of your holy name. Amen.

Accept our thanks for all you have done, O God. Our hands were empty, and you filled them.

May Christ’s holy, healing, enabling Spirit be with us every step of the way, and be our guide as our road changes and turns, and the blessing of God our Creator, Redeemer and Giver of life be among us now and remain with us forever. Amen.