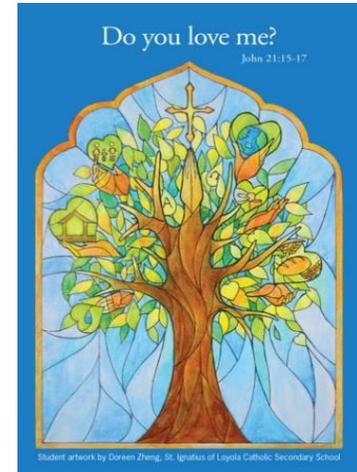


I am writing this in between the two significant feasts of Ascension and Pentecost. Growing up, I never liked the Ascension: it was a goodbye for which I was never ready. The world, to my young mind, seemed safer and better as long as Jesus was around. Seeing him lifted up into heaven, I was left with a profound grief I could never name.

Now that I am older, I realize that for my whole life, and the 2000 years since, Jesus was never here physically, but at his place close to the Father. All this time, we have been living with, in and under the Spirit of Pentecost, that vague third person of the Trinity who is given a female persona, and who theologians say is the same figure as Wisdom from the Hebrew scriptures, who was with God at the beginning of creation (Proverbs 8.22-31):

*The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.
Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth...
when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker;
and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.*



It is reassuring to know that this Holy Spirit whom we cannot see and who has this ambiguous identity has been a consistent, active agent in our salvation history and our lives.

With the feast of the Ascension freshly behind us, the grief of seeing Jesus physically leave is balanced with the fact that our human nature is now seated at God's right hand. With Jesus seated close to the Father, there is something deeply profound that our humanity is given this holy honour. Jesus has taken our human nature into heaven with him. With all our struggles to accept what it means to be human: our vulnerability, our mortality, our susceptibility for disease, heartbreak, injury, and death (physically, mentally and spiritually), it is uplifting that all of which makes us uncomfortable with ourselves has been redeemed and is seated next to God in the person of the Risen Christ.

With Pentecost, we are reminded that this story, is our story. The chapter that began with Pentecost, continues with us today. Yes, *today*, despite the death and despair surrounding us in the news and in the world...or, in spite of it all.

Much like my childhood reaction, there is a human part of us that wants Jesus here, we want to cling to Jesus and defer to his power to silence, cure, heal and resurrect the parts of our world that begs for divine retribution, reconciliation, restoration and re-creation. It feels too overwhelming for us to do this work on our own, with our hands shaking, reaching out in the uncertainty to trust God has our backs. Trusting God is a shaky endeavour, not because God cannot be trusted, but because we carry within us a constant sense of distrust with things we cannot prove. We want proof of God's existence. We want answers that are not ours to have, nor are we capable of comprehending ("*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.*" Psalm 55.8).

Dr. Brené Brown, whose work revolves around vulnerability, speaks of courage being born out of vulnerability; courage happens when we show up though there is risk, uncertainty and emotional exposure ([Listening to Shame, Ted Talk 2012](#)). We may feel unworthy, unprepared, or not ready. So did the disciples. Yet, when Jesus asked Peter three times if Peter loved him, it was a reminder to Peter of a crucial moment in their relationship when Peter did not show up for Jesus. Jesus was giving Peter a chance to override the memory and make it better. Three times Peter responded with

a strong and sharp “yes.” He boldly went through his vulnerability and showed courage; he did not hide behind his vulnerability or use it as an excuse. Nor did he do it alone. He had his friends, his support network, his tribe. To live in, with and under Pentecost, we must do the same, together. Brace yourself: It is a work that never ends, and with the world in the state that it is in today, the Holy Spirit is beckoning us to join her in renewing the face of the earth.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

By A. Rerecich, School Chaplaincy Leader, St. Thomas Aquinas CSS