

## Second Sunday of Easter

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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April 28, 2019

This January, I went to the Holy Land with my seminary, and when in Jerusalem, we visited the Garden of Gethsemane, the garden where Jesus was arrested. The olive trees there are hundreds of years old. And while they aren't the exact trees that were there when Jesus was, they were from those trees- replanted with parts of those trees. And while walking through the garden, I felt like I was there on that night. I could feel the Holy Spirit. I could feel that creation contains memories and is a holy place.

And with today's reading, what most people remember about it is "doubting Thomas," who wanted to see to believe, after all the other disciples got to see Jesus' resurrected body. But what caught my eye while reading was, before Thomas was there, Jesus breathed on the disciples and said "Receive the Holy Spirit," the 'breathed' in this text uses the same word as when God breathed life into dust, to create Adam in the book of Genesis (2:7).

Thinking of the Holy Spirit being connected with creation made me pause, because for me, it's been in nature that I feel most connected to the Holy Spirit. It's been surrounded by trees, or near a lake that I have felt the most at peace and the most connected with who I am.

And trees are here to help us breathe, where we breathe in the oxygen they provide, and give them carbon dioxide to absorb. It's a wonderful symbiotic relationship; we're dependent on each other. They are constantly breathing new life into us, through releasing oxygen, and absorbing carbon dioxide-- absorbing our breath. It's this whole cycle of giving and receiving life that nature naturally provides for us!

Just, God breathed life into creation, into Adam. And Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit, life, onto the disciples, and WE are constantly breathing in new life from God's creation.

And while there's the Holy Spirit, bringing new life into the disciples, Jesus is also alive! He's here with us. But he still has his wounds, on his hands and feet, and his side.

And, in today's reading, Thomas wants Jesus to show him his wounds, – to make this real. He wasn't there when Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit onto the other disciples early in the reading; he didn't get to see Jesus and his wounds. He wants to know that this bodily resurrection is real, and thinks that seeing these wounds will make this whole thing make sense, because Jesus being alive just doesn't make sense!

And with my mind recently on nature as God's creation, I wonder exactly what the earth's wounds are. Show me your wounds, Earth. Climate Change immediately comes to mind. Climate Change is a gaping wound. Gushing. Struggling. Still waiting to be attended to. Still waiting to be believed.

And some other wounds of the world are: Money being hoarded by a very select few, while people in Flint, Michigan still don't have [clean water](#). It's been five years. The Dakota Access Pipeline was still made while the politicians who eventually approved it, [held stock](#) in the energy companies building it. The Ozone Layer, with its gaping hole.

And these are only a few of the wounds of our Earth.

And these wounds make me want to protect my favorite places in creation. Makes me want to protect my friend's favorite places. Makes me want to protect your favorite places.

Not too long ago, I attended a meeting for the Faith and Justice Collective, a community organizing group at my seminary. Our main topic this year has been about climate justice, specifically water for all. At the beginning of one of our meeting, we all went around the circle, saying what our favorite place in creation is. Some mentioned

national parks they'd visited or areas near their hometown, but most people spoke of the summer camp they worked at, myself included.

Bethel Horizons is in Dodgeville, Wisconsin, near the Iowa border. And that area is called the "Driftless Area," because during the ice age, it was untouched by glaciers, creating deep river valleys and rolling hills.

There's this one spot at camp, where when looking out from Main Cliff, you can see into the valley, and see all the cliffs surrounding it, as well as Question Mark pond, where it curves just so to look like a question mark. You could see the trails going around the pond, and the black berries along the trails that would ripen midsummer, creating the perfect hiking snack, staining everyone's fingertips.

Throughout my time working at Horizons, I spent a lot of it at Main Cliff, being in awe of God's creation and feeling like I had been renewed.

And I want to protect Bethel Horizons, make sure it's still here for decades to come. I want to make sure that my favorite places and your favorite places will still be here. Because climate change is one of the gaping wounds of the earth.

And through Jesus and through our faith, we are the Body of Christ. At the same time, we are causing these wounds on the body of Christ, on this earth.

Thomas wanted to see, to believe, because Jesus being alive seemed like such an unbelievable thing, and wanted to see something he knew would make this real, because he knew that Jesus died in pain and knew that there would be scars. And not even scars, but open wounds. Because it takes time to heal from something as horrific as crucifixion.

And it will take time for our earth to heal from all the damage done, to heal from climate change. As of this November, the Ozone is starting to [heal itself](#), it's shrinking! Humpback Whales and the American Bison are no longer on the [endangered list](#)!

Clean energy is the way of the future and the now, and already there has been a positive impact on the world. The solar panels here at Wicker Park Lutheran have helped to lower carbon emissions and positively affect the environment. On the Wicker Park Lutheran Church website, you can [monitor](#) how the solar panels are doing and what the environmental benefits it has provided. When I checked on Friday, it said that, during the dark months of winter, we had saved 6,390 pounds worth of CO2 emissions, and that's equivalent to 161 trees planted.

So, the Holy Spirit is this giver of new life, where the word used to describe creating Adam, was also used to describe Jesus breathing on the disciples. And the disciples see Jesus' wounds; they see the bodily resurrection in person.

We are also the body of Christ, and we have wounds too, but there's hope, there's healing. We just need to think big picture of how we can heal, like solar panels and climate change, for example. Jesus breathed new life onto the disciples and we are breathing in that new life constantly. Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed.