

I come in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the book *The Shack*, by William Young, Mackenzie (the main character) loses his young daughter to a brutal abduction and murder. Mack is held captive by grief, hate, and doubt, leaving him in despair and hopelessness. As the story unfolds, Mack ultimately has an encounter with the divine. Young stretches our imaginations and breaks with the stereotypes associated with the Trinity. Rather than the white, bearded, male cloud-dweller, God the Father is described as a large black woman who loves to cook. The European Jesus is portrayed as a Jewish male. And the author describes the Holy Spirit: “This wiry-looking person was maybe of northern Chinese or Nepalese or even Mongolian ethnicity. It was hard to tell because Mack’s eyes had to work to see her at all. The Asian lady moved toward him, taking his face in both her hands. Gradually and intentionally, she moved her face closer to his and just when he imagined she was going to kiss him, she stopped and looked deep into his eyes. Mack thought he could almost see through her. Then she smiled and her scents seemed to wrap themselves around him and lift a huge weight off his shoulders. Mack suddenly felt lighter than air, almost as if he were no longer touching the ground. She was hugging him without hugging him, or really without even touching him.”

To walk behind her was like tracking a sunbeam. Light seemed to radiate through her and then reflect her presence in multiple places at once. Her nature was rather ethereal, full of dynamic shades and hues of color and motion. Mack thought, “She is obviously not a being who is predictable.”

In the early Church, Irenaeus associated Holy Wisdom – the Spirit of God, with the feminine gendered Greek name, “Sophia.” For me, rather than being a noun, I like to think of the Holy Spirit as a verb – an action word. Sophia gives life, and inspires action. This unpredictable, crazy, divine force leads us into light, and nudges us along towards Freedom and Truth. She uses the magnificent messes of our lives to cast color over creation, and to bring glory to God. We can find the soothing peace that only God can give in her voice. Her timeless presence can be felt in the sacraments, whispers of the wind, or in that burning in our hearts.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus says, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, **to be with you forever.** This is the Spirit of truth. You know him, **because he abides with you, and he will be in you.**”

"The Holy Spirit will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

This Advocate, the Holy Spirit, Sophia, lives with you and in you, but can only be found if you seek to know and trust Jesus. In this divine peace, you can be set free from all that holds you captive. For me, it means that my own plans, agendas, and desire for control must take a back seat to Sophia. I must be willing to be flexible, to go with her flow, to trust her fully.

But, I like to be ‘in control.’ I’d rather underwrite the terms and conditions of my relationship with the Holy Spirit, than to give her carte blanche over my life. I’ll do this, but not that. Yet, as I am nudged along in trust, I am no longer surprised when Sophia looks at my best laid plans and laughs.

In Acts, the disciples were sitting around, trying to make heads or tails out of recent events. Then, the sound of a violent wind filled the room, and tongues of fire appeared over each of them. And they were so filled with the Holy Spirit that they could not contain themselves! On today’s agenda? Nope!

So, what happened? They began to speak in tongues! They ran outside and proclaimed the wonders and greatness of God. Imagine these guys, lifted up and out of their captivity in fear, running into the streets, so filled with the Holy Spirit, that onlookers thought they were crazy, or drunk (a little too much of the ‘good wine’).

Have you ever had sudden inspiration? It might start with, “Call me crazy, but . . .” It hits you like a pie in the face! Pow! Or, sometimes there is an unsettling voice in your hearts that cries to be heard, to be set free. Remember, the Holy Spirit is wispy and unpredictable, and perhaps even a little crafty.

So Peter speaks up and says, “Hey, these guys aren’t drunk – **it’s only 9 o’clock in the morning!** – like that somehow explains it? If I was walking down the street at 9am and witnessed that, my first inclination would be to cross over to the other side. But wouldn’t it be fun to ask them to share some of what they are consuming, so that I can be lighter than air and feel that same level of joy? I’m sure they brought enough Spirit for everyone.

Jesus promised that God will give you the Holy Spirit to be with you and in you forever, and will do whatever you ask in his name for the glorification of God. I wonder if this Spirit, the unpredictable, wispy, crafty, Sophia, helps your crazy dreams to come true? Those dreams that seem crazy to you, may not be so crazy to God. It’s that Spirit that takes the messiness of your life, your hopes and dreams, and transforms them into glory.

Sophia is in you, and is in love with you. She knows everything about you, embraces you, and rejoices in you. This divine Wisdom may inspire you to do something completely out of the ordinary. So, pay attention – She may be nudging you towards fulfilling that dream. Just trust her and go for the ride.

I recall a rollercoaster ride I took with my grand-daughter in which the ride was totally in the dark. Sometimes we'd ascend, descend, race forward, freefall backwards .. never knowing what was coming up next (maybe lunch 😊). I had faith that the ride would end safely, and remember it as a heck of a lot of fun. Is this how I should trust the Holy Spirit? Yep.

You never know, you may be inspired to follow that wispy sunbeam. You may experience that holy embrace. You may feel her wind pushing you in a new direction. **You may feel her radiance within you, and feel the irresistible urge to run into the street in drunken joy to proclaim the wonders of God.** So, get on the ride, buckle up, close your eyes, and hang on! Trust in the Spirit. **No need to be worried, troubled, or self-conscious because you are acting crazy – crazy for God.** And, in faith and trust, you will be able to look back at life and think, “Wow, that was fun! We’re not drunk” **it’s only 9:30 in the morning.** Amen.