

### ***Just Tap On The Wall If You Need Me***

After several weeks of confinement, deprived of social, even facial contact of the most ordinary kind, Mass attendance, regular meetings discussing things with friends, getting out to breakfast at familiar places, the proximity of bodies without fear of recoil, the monotony of one's "sheltering" in place (which I guess is what the disciples in today's first reading were doing way back then), it's Pentecost and time to call upon Marcel Proust's grandmother for help – as I have in the past.

Of course that first Pentecost caused a ruckus – the outbreak of the Holy Spirit blew things wide open. But I will settle for a less pyrotechnical pentecost – like the one Marcel had at the seaside resort of Balbec (in his masterpiece *In Search of Lost Time*).

He describes himself much as I would describe myself now. Balbec and especially its Grand Hotel intimidated him. Its grand staircase, its elevator to a room far above the lobby, the impersonal behavior of the staff, the unfamiliar objects of his room, things which did not know him, seeming distrustful of him, the clock *persistently* speaking in an unknown tongue. He was half dead with exhaustion from his trip, burning with fever, unable to rest. Then his companion, his grandmother, *came in, and in the expansion of my constricted heart there opened at once an infinity of space.*

He goes on to say, *I threw myself into the arms of my grandmother . . . and pressed my lips to her face as though I were gaining access to that immense heart which she opened to me. And she gently responded, You just tap on the wall if you need me during the night. I'm just on the other side and the partition is quite thin.*

It was also the Spirit in the guise of his grandmother who roused Marcel the next morning to show him Balbec at dawn, to transform his fear into fascination before a vision of a sea so vast and *the snowy crests of its emerald waves.* It was also she who, as they sat within the hotel's glass enclosed dining room that morning, opened a window to let in a breeze that sent menus, newspapers, hats and veils flying - much to the chagrin of the other guests, but to her own delight as she sat *fortified by the celestial draft.* Which goes to show that this grandmother was as capable of creating a ruckus as was the Spirit of our first Pentecost reading.

But right now during this prolonged lockdown I prefer to be the played-out Marcel, to tap tentatively upon my lockdown wall three times in hopes of hearing three others, *in a different tone from mine, stamped with a calm auctoritas, , , , saying to me plainly, "Don't be agitated; I've heard you; I shall be with you in a minute . . . Mistake my poor pet's knocking for anyone else's! Why, Granny could tell it a mile away! Do you suppose there's anyone else in the world who's such a silly-billy, with such febrile little knuckles, so afraid of waking me up and of not making me understand? Even if it just gave the tiniest scratch . . . I could hear it just now, trying to make up its mind . . ."*

*Come, Holy Spirit, come! / You, of comforters the best; / You, the soul's most welcome guest; / . . .  
. Grateful coolness in the heat; / Solace in the midst of woe . . .*

**Geoff Wood**