

## **GETTING YOUR SECOND WIND: JOHN 20:19-23**

*By Kathleen Peterson*

**Molly was upset with her teenage son, Jack. He'd done something that hurt her deeply—in fact, cut her to the core, stabbed her like a dagger in the heart.**

**She wept and then she waited. Only God knew where he was then. She was not God. She could not appear before Jack to tell him of the peace that was coming back to her after their quarrel. As she prayed, her strength returned and grew, and she had a vision. She saw Jack's room filled with balloons that she would and did blow up. Balloons from floor to ceiling, spilling out around the sign across his door that said, "Welcome Home!"**

**She prepared that place out of the inspiration and the abundance of new life and hope the Spirit had poured into her. And when it was ready, Jack came. And from that place they began again. But so much stronger and wiser, so much forgiven and with the great generosity of spirit that comes from receiving such gifts.**

**Every mother knows you always get your "second wind." Mothers have to know that, or they would have stopped dead in**

**their tracks centuries ago! John the Baptist saw it coming to the disciples in a very special way.**

**John had said, "I baptize you with water for repentance, but...[Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt. 3:11). So here is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, who will come soon—in the Acts story—by fire.**

**The disciples had found out what the world does to God. If God came and lived here, what would happen to God? That, for them, was no longer a hypothetical question. They saw. It was hideous. It took away all their courage, hope, and peace. Their heartrending experience of Jesus' humiliation and death had left them lifelessly limp in body, mind, and spirit. Their self-knowledge of their denial and abandonment of Jesus was enough to leave them drowning in awful awareness of their sin forever. How could they recover from all that? The only thing to do after all that is to lock yourself in and throw away the key. Both the world out there and the one in you are far too dangerous to risk being at large again.**

**There he is! Suddenly, unaccountably, through those locked doors, he "came and stood among them" (v. 19). And he**

said, "Peace be with you." He said it twice. He showed them the still clearly visible signs of the terrible injury the world and they had done to him. But he came back to them, filled with peace and palpable new life.

He told them they were to go back out again, too. He'd been sent out in the first place by God, knowing what he was in for from the start. They should not be caught mummified in the webs of humiliation and despair. There were peace and empowerment that did not depend at all on what the world did. They could have both from him, just as he had both from God.

The God who originally "breathed into [that dust] the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7) could do it again, and did, and does. But that was their second wind. The new birth carried with it not just physical breathing, but the Holy Spirit, who sanctified the life by reviving it consciously and so lifting it to a higher level of awareness of the gift.

To be forgiven in that way, by the God you have denied outside and inside yourself, who nevertheless came back to revive you again! Ah, that is the second wind that will blow up balloons forever. After the pain of all our usually inadvertent

**(not knowing what we're doing) attacks on God's goodness  
subsides a bit, God is back. Standing in our midst, despite all  
obstacles, this God assures us that there will eventually be  
enough balloons to lift us all and that the blowing of second  
winds will definitely continue until there are.**

**Let us pray...**

**Holy God,**

**you spoke the world into being.**

**Pour your Spirit to the ends of the earth,**

**that your children may return from exile**

**as citizens of your commonwealth,**

**and our divisions may be healed**

**by your word of love and righteousness. Amen.**

*(prayer from Vanderbilt Divinity Library)*