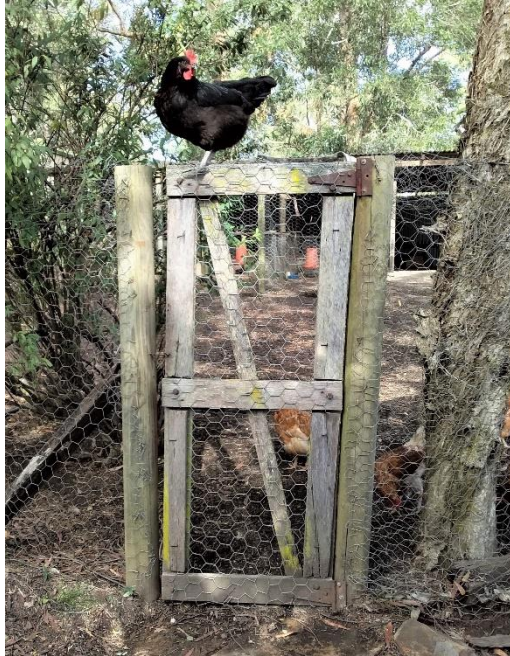


# The Break-Out!



First there was one who saw a way out and flew up on the gate. She looked around to view the possibilities that lay before her. Almost immediately two more hens joined her, and then there were three considering a 'mass' break-out! (Where was the 1.5m. social distancing we might ask?)

Fortunately the other eight hens in the yard showed no interest in following. (They knew that later in

the day the door would be open for them.) It did not take long for the young escapees to fly down and be off to green pastures.

Some of us, especially older people who have been in lockdown for weeks, can be overcome at times with a desire for freedom—to be out and off! Now, at least in NSW and in some other States, we may experience the joy and freedom of driving to meet members of our family and friends we have not seen face to face since March. Yet social distancing and other rules still exist. Perhaps we are tempted to ignore some of the imposed restrictions, especially if we see others enjoying sitting at meals or standing together?



This Sunday is Pentecost Sunday, when we recall God's gift of the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Church, and us as individual members of that great body of Christ. The Spirit comes to empower and guide us in living out the freedom of God's love, where our unique potential as part of God's creation is enabled to develop, grow and benefit all.

In Acts 2, the disciples had been through a difficult and challenging time. Their lives were in turmoil. Jesus, their leader, had died a horrible death, his body placed in a tomb, but then he was raised to life by God and departed from them. They were now to wait for the Spirit that Jesus said would come to them. Some must have been tempted to go home to Galilee, they had had enough and wanted to return to 'normal' life. But could any of them return to 'normal' life? What they had experienced together and individually had changed them. What was to happen next?

While waiting for the Spirit, the disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem when they heard a noise like a strong wind and saw something that looked like tongues of fire. These signs indicated the coming of the Holy Spirit which filled all present; young and old, sick and well, men and women, slave and free, giving *all* the gift of God's Spirit of love.

The disciples, who had feared arrest by the Religious leaders, were now emboldened by the Spirit to go out and share with others their new life in God. Words poured out from them in various languages and this drew a crowd. Then Peter told the people how Jesus of Nazareth, who was killed and raised to life by God, was the desired and expected Messiah. His words touched many people, rich and poor, who repented, were forgiven their sins, received the Spirit and shared goods and meals with one another.

We have recently been through strange times - drought, bushfires and the many limitations on our social interactions and travel because of Covid-19. The gradual lifting of the restrictions has resulted in mixed responses from people, some are relieved, others are fearful. Are we hoping to return to 'normal' life, as it was before? The trouble is, we have changed and our world has changed.

We have experienced the whole world suffering from a virus, as with Climate Change. Each of us, regardless of whether we are leaders, young, old, indigenous, migrants, strangers, tourists, Asians, Europeans, Americans, Indians, Africans, alone or members of a large family have become aware of how closely connected we are to one another. Our actions affect others.

We are being trusted to 'break-out' cautiously, doing and going as we are permitted. If we try to push ahead too quickly we are warned that we might infect others, cause restrictions to reapply and prevent the unemployed from returning to work. We are relying on each other.

As Christians, we may share God's love by staying home or by visiting and caring for others in ways that are open to us. When we go gently, we can have time to look around us and appreciate other people and nature. We may then realise that the world and our lives are no longer as they were before, 'normal'. Perhaps, *just* perhaps, in this strange time, the world and the lives of all living beings, including humans, have the opportunity to 'break-out' and become a little more 'normal', as God created them to be?

We are today more aware of our many neighbours, brothers and sisters whom we are to love, and God's amazing creation we are called to love, preserve and look after. Let us have a little more patience than my black hens, and draw on the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide us so that all people and nature can enjoy more of the freedom and normality of living in the Spirit of God's love.

*Sister Helen CSC*

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