



“The Holy Spirit is that power which opens eyes that are closed, hearts that are unaware and minds that shrink from too much reality.”
John V Taylor

Prayer
Holy, hovering dove
bring hope into our chaos
and a bright new beginning.
Amen

The Holy Spirit descended... like a dove Luke 3.22

Most of the canvas of this Pentecost image by John Brokenshire (b.1958) is covered by a deep, inky darkness, blue-black. There seems to be nothing else apart from a central shimmering. Here though, there is movement, a suggestion of beating wings, discernible wing-tips.

The artist wanted 'to convey a sense of a hovering bird' and offers strong intimations of the early verses of Genesis, darkness covering the face of the deep and the spirit of God 'hovering on the chaos of the world's first day', as John Bell puts it. Bird and spirit are images which go hand in hand and so the painting also speaks of that same Spirit which would re-create the disciples, filling them with radiant courage.

What do we see as we gaze at this painting in the context of coronavirus?

Perhaps it is the darkness more than anything which resonates. But the longer we look, the more we see that it is not a dead darkness. It is not nothing. The delicate shimmering is casting delicate strands of light for one thing, and for another, we are acutely conscious of the

sky in the top left hand corner. Something is happening. A new dawn? A new creation? Malachi's "Sun of righteousness" maybe, "rising with healing in its wings"?

'Hope is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul', wrote the poet Emily Dickinson, and Brokenshire's bird certainly radiates hope. He wanted it to lead us into an inner space – "not a place of sanctuary, but of involvement, journey, even encounter".

Where might it lead us? How might the new creation offered this Pentecost by God's Spirit present itself? A heightened awareness of our interdependence with each other and the whole created order? A simpler, softer footprint?

In the first verse of his recent poem (May 2020), Malcolm Guite muses thus:

*Perhaps in all this crisis, all this pain,
This reassessment of our loss and gain,
Nature rebukes our brief authority
Yet offers us the chance to start again
And this time with a new humility...*