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Our Lady Queen of Peace: Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord

I am hardly a country music fan. In fact, I don't think I could tell Kenny Chesny from Tim McGraw if they came one after the next in the communion line here at OLQP. However, there is one song that has been with me, especially as I have been preparing for today's feast of the Ascension. It is the popular song, "Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places."

I suppose that I think of this song because of its catchy melody. But more important, it's truth-telling words that resonate with the Easter experience of those first disciples. On that first Easter night, they were locked in the room out of fear. Then, we hear in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles that "after Jesus had been taken up to heaven the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet. When they entered the city, they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers." That is a far cry from what is written earlier about being locked in a room. They went from fear and paralysis to freedom and prayer.

In that song that I have been humming I think there is a similar progression:

**I've spent a lifetime looking for you
Single bars and good time lovers, never true
Playing a fools game, hoping to win
Telling those sweet lies and losing again.**

**I was looking for love in all the wrong places
Looking for love in too many faces
Searching your eyes, looking for traces
Of what.. I'm dreaming of...
Hopin' to find a friend and a lover
God bless the day I discover
Another heart, lookin' for love**

But by the end of the song, we sing:

**You came a'knocking at my heart's door..
You're everything I've been looking for..**

**No more looking for love in all the wrong places
Looking for love in too many faces
Searching your eyes, looking for traces
Of what.. I'm dreaming of...
Now that I found a friend and a lover
God bless the day I discover
You, oh you, lookin' for love**

Church, we have spent more than 40 days of Easter: Singing “Alleluias,” splashing in holy water, feasting instead of fasting, celebrating the great love of God. Yet, have we found love, felt love, or given it away?

Like Waylon Jennings, those first disciples learned to look in the right place for love. But before they did that, they had to stop looking in the wrong place. It seems to me that they were so in love with the experience of Jesus that they had in the flesh that they could not recognize his Spirit. They were so tied, so transfixed to his real presence in person, that they could not see his real presence in the living Spirit of the living people around them, even the ones they were locked in that upper room with.

Is it any wonder that the two men in the first reading today ask them, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?” They could have been singing “Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places.” Yes, Jesus was no longer present to them up there, but rather down here. Not above their shoulders, but next to their shoulders, in the women and men and children next to them. But they just couldn’t see it. They were looking for love in all the wrong places.

This Feast of the Ascension is not some magical moment about the departure of Jesus. It is the real moments of our lives about the real presence of Christ. When God’s grace pokes us on the shoulder, pinches our insecurities, or pierces our heart—maybe even with some pain.

I close with two beautiful examples of Ascension Love in the Right Place. In a few moments, we shall baptize two children, brought to us by God through the love of their parents. Today, we baptize with water, but everyday hereafter, their parents and family members and friends, and eventual classmates and work colleagues will baptize them with the Holy Spirit as they give them experiences of God’s amazing love. Like today’s Gospel commands us: Baptize! Once the water dries today, they—like us all—will be thirsty for some more baptism. Let’s keep faithful to the Gospel and keep giving them the Spirit of today’s baptism through the virtues of Jesus deep within us.

And second, next Monday, our Church will host a Prayer Vigil for Peace, asking God to end the War in Iraq. Confronting Violence Through Prayer, we will pray that the violence deep within us might end. Personally, communally, and even nationally. Today, we shall once again offer a sign of peace. Perhaps we are challenged to take it one step further. Not to offer signs of peace, but to give real peace, real reconciliation, and the real presence of Christ. A question for us today: To whom shall we give this real peace?

We are Ascension People. Our feet are on the ground. And our hearts are in the right place. So is the love we seek. Like those first disciples, we no longer are locked in a room. We are no longer looking for love in all the wrong places. Because we have found it: Love is in the Body of Christ, wherever we experience it!