



Floating in the Ocean of God's Love

By Mary Escueta

I am grateful Lord, truly I am. But as this pandemic stretches out, I have lots of other feelings, not as attractive as gratitude. If I spend too much time reading the news, or even speaking with someone ELSE who's reading too many news stories, the thankfulness gets crowded out by other emotions.

My concerns are so petty. I am ashamed to admit I think "real" problems would be easier to deal with. Pandemic, possibility of unemployment and illness aside, I'm looking at a face that has more wrinkles than it had a year ago. I've gained at least six pounds and the effects of gravity are astounding! I'm noticing discomfort in my hands, my joints and my wrists. The maintenance required on this "older model" body for normal living is extremely time consuming ...and that doesn't *begin* to address the actual, logistical concerns of living as I age. St. Teresa of Avila wrote, "Seal my lips on my aches and pains; they are increasing, and love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by." When the world was moving at the speed of light- pre-pandemic- it seemed much easier to ignore these thoughts and annoyances, to distract myself. Now, my trifling concerns are like the whirling cloud of dust that surrounded the character "Pigpen" in Charles M. Schultz's comic strip *Peanuts*. I keep trying to get away from my thoughts, but they follow me like that cloud of dust.

The only sure-fire cure I've found for such maladies is to bathe in the ocean of God's love. It's like sun-bathing only spelled differently: Son-bathing. I come with all my dirt, my pettiness, my baggage ...I close my eyes and imagine myself floating in the ocean...the cloudless blue sky, the water an unbelievably beautiful blue-green color and the sun warming me and recharging my "solar" cell. I lift my head and see the white sand of the beach and hear only the gentle breeze - no phones ringing, no cars, no refrigerator humming, no screaming children. I breathe deeply and smell that "beachy smell" – a combination of sunblock and sunshine. I let the warm water wash over me, cleansing me, relaxing my mind and my body.

In his message on April 26, 2020, Pope Francis urged us as followers of Jesus to "...Move from thoughts about myself to the reality of my God...Go on looking at the greatest and truest reality of life," he encouraged. "Jesus is alive, Jesus loves me. This is the greatest reality."

I am floating in the ocean of God's love which surrounds me, upholds me, heals me, warms me and purifies me. This is the reality- I just don't always take the time to acknowledge it. The cloud of dust is washed away, and my mind is filled with the incredible and overwhelming knowledge that God loves me. Me! Petty thoughts, real or imagined problems, wrinkles and all!



Mary Floriano-Escueta currently serves St. Dorothea's Church in Eatontown, NJ. as Director of Music Ministries- where she sings, plays, conducts and directs multiple choirs. Mary also has a heart for Pastoral Care, and pre-Covid, she regularly visited senior citizen complexes to lead Communion services and encourage the residents. She sings professionally as soloist and ensemble member with *Opera by the Sea* in Bradley Beach, *A Night on Broadway*, and at various venues in the region. Mary has been married to her husband for 35 years, and is "Mom" to her two mostly-grown-up children.