

She dove right in

She showed up at church a few weeks before Easter. She sat perched on a place where she could see people coming and going. She was dressed in brilliant white, which was so becoming for her figure. Even though it was not Easter, she wore a plumed hat which did not even seem out of place.

She would come and go over the next few days. She always seemed to return to the same perch. Then one day, she surprised us. She dropped by the rectory. Well, in fact, not so much by the rectory offices but by the residence part, just by my living room window. During the next few weeks, she would watch us as we went about our daily business.

Eventually, other people began to notice her presence and began to feel attracted to her. They even stopped to talk to her, especially the children who dropped by. It seemed as if she was assuming the role of bodyguard, protecting all who came and went.

Her presence became so familiar that we began to take her for granted, except when she began to be absent for certain periods of time. When she was absent, we began to look for her in other places but did not see her. Then, mysteriously, she would reappear and ask us, "Did you miss me?" And of course, she told us, "I'll be around for a while. Don't worry!" So we stopped worrying.

Seeing that she was hanging around a lot, we wondered if she might be hungry. She wouldn't really tell us so, just in case, we left out some food for her. Then she surprised us. On Easter morning, we noticed her enjoying the food we had set out for her.

Another thing we noticed about her was that she would disappear in the middle of the day for a while. Maybe it was getting a little too hot for her. We also noticed that she seemed very protective of something we could not see. She was constantly vigilant about her space and surroundings, making sure that no strangers intruded into her space.

As time went on, she kept minding her own business. She felt comfortable in our midst but did not want to intrude on our day to day activities. No matter where we went, we felt her presence, even if we didn't see her around. We felt so protected and so assured.

We also noticed that the weather did not really affect her presence. Even on windy days, she stood erect, her brilliant white attire ruffling in the breeze. It almost seemed that she had been through many storms in the past and knew how to handle even another simple windy day. When we saw her on those windy days, she always seemed to face the wind as if to show her strength and to remind us that we, too, can weather any storm that may come our way.

As the weeks passed and we saw our friend as just part of the family, we felt her watching over us and could even chat with her without feeling silly, our thoughts were drawn toward a pivotal event that loomed on the horizon – Pentecost.

In one sense, we found it ironic that she had stopped by to visit our church, but, on the other hand, we found it the most natural thing in the world for her to drop by such a fitting place.

Then, one day she surprised us. She began to speak to us in a language we could understand. She began, "You may wonder why I've been hanging around here lately. Well, I've been around here all the time. Sometimes, I am noticed, and other times, I'm not as obvious."

Then, she looked around at her familiar surroundings and continued, "You see, I like being around people and churches. We go back a long way. You could say even to the beginning. I like to make promises and I keep them as I continue to be present. I have a long history of being the driving force in people's lives down through the centuries. I guide people. I inspire people. I challenge people. I walk with them. But most of all, I assure them that nothing will separate them from the love of God. You see, this is most personal, assuring and spirit-filled."

With that, she dove right out and disappeared. Yet, we know she will not be too far away.