

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

"It's my party and I'll cry if I want to, cry if I want to, cry if I want to. You would cry too, if it happened to you." This 60's song, sung by Lesley Gore, came to mind as I sat listening to speaker after speaker give his or her praise to a retired politician. Each accolade was much deserved. This was an outstanding man, who had an outstanding career. It's just, it's just . . . well..

Time and energy had been given to make this appreciation dinner a success. The right people were assembled. The meat was roast beef. The vegetables were green beans. The cake had Cool Whip. It was the appropriate group having the appropriate meal with the appropriate speakers. It's just, it's just . . . well, you see . . . oh, I know it's silly and it should not have mattered - but it was my birthday.

Birthdays are a big deal to me. I can't help it. That's part of my heritage, fostered primarily by my mother. She was born on Valentine's Day. During her formative years she thought the day had been created solely to commemorate her creation. She believed all hearts and flowers were given because of her. She was raised in a small, rural Alabama town where everyone knew her as Mrs. Mary's and Mr. Edward's only daughter. All of her actions, like those of her contemporaries, were observed and reported. The community took pride in and

felt responsible for its youth. Everyone knew Beverly White's birthday was Valentine's Day and acted accordingly. There was always a celebration.

Lord Jesus, I can't continue writing in this vein. The rug has been pulled out from under me. I started this letter last night before going to bed, continued writing a sentence or two to You as I walked to church for Morning Prayer. I wrote another sentence or two while waiting for the service to start, and was eagerly anticipating continuing as soon as the service ended. I was even planning to hide in the church library and have the luxury of a quiet hour with You before going to work. Everything was going as scheduled. I was signing the Office Book, recording the service held, the time, the place, the number present. I carefully added to the numbers, which were kept as to how many weekly Morning Prayer services had been held for the year. I was concentrating. I wanted to do this right. There was nothing worse than making a mistake on your designated line and having to use whiteout. This red leather book is of great importance. It contains part of our church history and will go into our archives. It is a record of how we worshipped daily at the Church of the Ascension. It's not a video. It's not a photograph album. None of our descendents will know the names of the people attending, what they looked like, what they wore, whom they sat next to, which pew they occupied, what cares they had. They won't know which hymns were sung,

how hands were held, which knees were bent, which hearts were broken, which spirits lifted. All they will know is that we did stand daily - daily on the rock of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's where I need to plant my anchor firmly today. I had to stop and put down my plans, my schedules, my cute little birthday letter and dig in deep. For as I completed recording my line of service information, I was told that Bo had been killed last night in a car accident. He was a young husband, father, churchman. I hadn't known him well, but I knew his Mama and Daddy. He had been my youngest son's eighth grade football coach.

My heart bleeds right now for the wife and children and Mama and Daddy and friends and loved ones of Bo's. I've experienced the excruciating pain that they are experiencing. I remember the cold-blade penetration I felt at age fourteen when my brother died, and again at age 28 when my father died. I remember. I won't forget.

Oh, the pain, the why's, the black hole void that the family and friends invariably have to feel. Yes, have to feel. They would not be human if they did not. It's the two-edged sword, which goes with love. Real people, totally alive people who've experienced love, invariably have big pierced hearts.

This is not a time for quoting scripture. We're not to try and bandage the wound. It needs to drain, not be covered and smothered to fester, but rather to drain. The wound's not

a gash, but rather a hole in the heart, for that's how it feels. A part of you is missing.

In the awfulness of this moment, two things come to mind. The first is our Lord Jesus' reaction to the pain of Mary's and Martha's mourning for their brother, His friend Lazarus. It says, "Jesus wept." John 11:35. So should we. Also, I see the image of mankind's last action inflicted on Christ on the cross - the sword piercing. John 19:34 says "One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water." I have no doubt in my mind it went straight through His heart. At that moment all hell broke loose only to be totally, I said totally, defeated for eternity.

That is reality, the ultimate reality - defeated death - because of our crucified Lord. Bo's family, in this time of grief, solidifying grief, possibly can't perceive this. I remember such times. Do you? They are slow thawing times. I believe frozen hearts are necessary when the pain is too much to bear. But then. . . But then. . . Gently, the melting does come. Friends help. Families help. Allowing others to hold you up while you regain your strength helps. Listening to the rhythmic pulses of nature helps. Watching sunsets and sunrises and tides flowing in and out help. Lying down and looking up at a star-studded sky and reaching out and touching another human being helps. Crying helps. Laughing helps. Remembering helps. Healing comes. A hole in the heart remains.

My Christ has a pierced heart. I'm glad. He knows. He understands. That's important to me. Even if hell freezes over, our Lord Jesus Christ's heart won't freeze, for His love for us allowed a sword to penetrate. He died with holes in His hands, in His feet, but most importantly for me and for you and for Bo's family, with a hole in His heart.

Precious Pilgrim, do you also have a holey heart? That's good if you do, for it means you're a lover, as our Lord is. His light seems to shine so much stronger through such vessels. Don't you think?

*I am your Swiss cheese-hearted lover,
Lucy*