

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

“Joy is a hugger” was the statement made by the radio evangelist about his wife. He continued with his sermon. I might as well have turned the volume down or the radio off at that point, for nothing else registered except that one sentence: “Joy is a hugger.” I agree.

I was driving back to the lake from church. I had gone to town for church reluctantly today. I had arrived at the lake at 10:30 the previous night, and to turn around and make the 45-minute trip back to Montgomery at 8:00 a.m. and return again after the service was a bit much (just as this sentence is).

I didn't want to go. I was tired. I wanted to go sit on the dock and do nothing, absolutely nothing. My world has been an especially hectic one this past week. Monday and Tuesday my husband and I, plus two of our children, met with his gubernatorial campaign team to start mapping out its strategy. At the same time, our little publishing company had 5,000 new books and 10,000 new cards arrive, plus we were simultaneously sending out 2000 reception invitations.

At the campaign meeting, my brain and heart were playing hopscotch. I needed, wanted, had to be, should have been at the meeting. I also needed, wanted, had to be, should have been at the office. I was becoming a fractured filly right before the professionals' eyes. This was the first time I had met

three of them, and I'm sure they're still thinking, "How are we going to package that lady's act?" for I was mentally here, there and yonder. They creatively brainstormed and planned. I claustrophobically compartmentalized my different roles. Help! How does one wear the different hats required? I was silently sounding my own role call: Christian? "Here," Wife? "Here." Mother? "Here." Grandmother? "Here." Publisher? "Here." Writer? "Here." Flower Arranger? "Here." Choir Person? "Here." Campaigner? . . . Campaigner? . . . Campaigner? (Gulp.)

I almost imagined the pros saying, "Is the candidate's wife present?" "Here."

"Are you ready to start campaigning?"

"Ah, Ah. . . Would you mind terribly when you start mapping out my bus route starting in, say, Vermont or Alaska instead of north Alabama?"

The primary is now less than a year away. Do they think there's a chance they can make me politically astute in that short a time? I'm told I'll need to make speeches (gulp!). I don't mind speaking in front of people. I've been doing that for the past two years with the books. It's just, well you see, I'm issue ignorant. Oh, I'll always give you my opinion, but as to knowing the facts and figures, or who the movers and the shakers are, I don't have a clue, plus really don't give a...

Lucy, hush.

Well, I'm just trying to be honest.

Now, if they're looking for someone who knows my husband, loves my husband, enjoys my husband, believes in my husband, has not a doubt that he is one of the finest men that she's ever known. . . . If they need someone who knows and understands the political world, plus has the business acumen to bring this state into the 21st century... If they could use someone who knows his country and loves his country, his family, and his dog; is brilliant, has a great sense of humor; doesn't pick up his clothes, snores occasionally (tell it all, sister!) . . . someone who's seen him at his best and seen him at his worst and still finds him dead attractive, who's seen him on the mountain tops and in the valleys and finds him always levelheaded. . . .

If they need someone who's seen him cry, who's seen him counsel, who's seen him direct and be directed, who's seen his middle-aged face turn into that of a wondering child's as he gazed at the stars. . . . someone who knows the man, loves the man, enjoys the man, and believes in the man. . . . Well, then, I guess the bus can start in Huntsville, Alabama instead of Anchorage, Alaska.

Now, where was I? Oh, yes, the "hat dance." This isn't a new phenomenon; humans have always had to perform many roles. We've always been required to change and rearrange our identities at different intervals during our lives. It's just that in today's demanding world there are more of them and they change more rapidly. The roles aren't as rigid, so we

might just be catching on to how to perform one part really well when it's time to change into another. We used to have years to perform one given role, whereas today they can change hourly. For some of these roles, we've had no training when we're thrown into the part. This tends to cause a little anxiety, and that was how I was feeling when "campaigner" was added to my hat collection. This was the first time it had really sunk into my mind. I needed to put "campaigner" into my costume closet.

Now, you may ask, "What does the beginning sentence, 'Joy is a hugger,' have to do with the theme of this letter?" Well, actually I don't know, but I still want it included. When I heard that statement, I wanted to shout, "Yes, that is a truth."

Maybe joy should be the glue that keeps us together as we skip from role to role. Maybe it is in joy that we find integration of self. I've always loved the explanation that JOY stands for Jesus, Others, and You. Now that sounds like a together person, don't you think?

I love that at our church we "pass the peace," which means that after we have said the General Confession on our knees and received absolution from the minister, we all rise and greet our neighbors as forgiven, refreshed Christians. The usual statement made is, "The peace of the Lord be with you." And your neighbors answer, "And also with you." BCP

In the choir, where I've held the same seating position between Sara Lee and Barbara for the past 13 years, we've added bear hugs to this ancient response.

It is a weekly, joyful time - one which I greatly look forward to. It's brought to life and given meaning to the statement, "Joy is a hugger." A hug given and received by fellow Christians is about as grand as it gets on this side of heaven. These ladies' response isn't dependent on which role I'm having to play, but rather dependent on the role which our Lord Jesus has already performed as Savior.

And now once more my Roll Call:

<i>"Christian?"</i>	<i>"Here."</i>
<i>"Wife?"</i>	<i>"Here."</i>
<i>"Mother?"</i>	<i>"Here."</i>
<i>"Grandmother?"</i>	<i>"Here."</i>
<i>"Publisher?"</i>	<i>"Here"</i>
<i>"Writer?"</i>	<i>"Here"</i>
<i>"Flower Arranger?"</i>	<i>"Here"</i>
<i>"Chorister?"</i>	<i>"Here"</i>
<i>"Campaigner?"</i>	<i>"Here"</i>
<i>"Joyful Hugger?"</i>	<i>"Here"</i>

Because of Jesus, I can be all of the above joyfully. How, Precious Pilgrim, is your role playing attitude today? Might you need a hug? If so, seek one out. I believe there's always a fellow Christian who'd be more than willing to oblige, just be

*willing to ask. There lies great benefit for both the huggee and
the hugger.*

With love, I am your sister in Christ,

Lucy