

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

My husband asked, "Now tell me one more time where are you going today, to meet with whom, and why?" We both jumped out of bed rushing to get ready to leave, he for Atlanta and me to Mobile.

"You're going to go drive six hours to have lunch at a fast food restaurant with this nun whom you've never met, who's been praying for you and your publishing company, Lightbearers. I see. Well, have a safe trip." I was off.

I arrived at our designated rendezvous spot a half hour early, so I settled into a booth and waited. What would this nun look like? Would she wear a habit? Would she glow? How would I recognize her? My friend Mary said she was about 40 years old and was a great Red Sox baseball fan. I didn't know what to expect or what we would talk about or have in common. All I knew was that I was to come and meet her, and I did.

She walked into the restaurant with assurance. She was dressed in a stylish light blue shirtwaist dress. Her head was encircled with short brown curls. She had blue eyes. She had a little gold chain with a dove around her neck. On her finger, she wore a gold ring with the symbols of grapes and doves on it. She had a pin on her dress, which I found out later was the insignia for her order. I stood up and walked over to her. We

hugged. Later she asked how I knew it was she. I said I didn't know, but I knew.

We talked with ease, nonstop.

We had a delightful two-hour luncheon. It was like the non-stop chatter of long lost school chums catching up. Nothing of great consequence discussed - just comfortable conversation. It was getting late, and Sister Joan insisted that I spend the night with her and the other sisters. She, of course, would have to check with them to be sure it was all right, for they lived in a "community." Part of living in community was to always be considerate of others. Each was to be included in the discussions and in any decision-making processes. She was sure it would be OK, for there was a guest room available.

I tried to graciously acknowledge the offer, for my husband wasn't going to be home that night and I was dreading the three-hour drive.

Sister Joan called and got authorization from the others, so I was formally invited to stay. I followed her home in my car, and as I drove, I called my friend Mary and said, "Guess where I am! Following Sister Joan's car to her house to spend the night." We giggled and laughed. That's the best thing to do when you're having an unexpected serendipity day. We also giggled and laughed when I related my husband's reaction to this escapade and continued to giggle and laugh when we surmised his reaction to the fact of my spending the night with the nuns. "What? Where? Why? Lucy, have you lost your

mind?" I knew he wouldn't say that, but his tone of voice would indicate such questions.

I called home and left the telephone number of the cenacle. That, Mary informed me, was the name of a Trinitarian house. We drove into the driveway of a red brick, one-story suburban home. We walked in and it seemed to be just a home, a little neater perhaps, a little more feminine in décor perhaps, a little more religious art perhaps, but basically a typical home. The occupants just happen to be five nuns.

I was shown to the guest room, which was the room of one of the sisters who was at school for the summer. It was feminine, small, and immaculate. Have you ever hung your clothes up in a nun's closet, Pilgrim? Even though I had brought only the bare necessities, I felt rather opulent. This was not a group from which I could borrow makeup or clothes. The reason being, makeup, there was none, and clothes, there were none to spare. Owww! Was I starting to feel a little materially encumbered!

Sister Joan showed me around the rest of the house, but never into the other sisters' rooms. I suspected that would have been seen as an invasion of privacy. There was a living room, dining room, kitchen, breakfast room, community room and a chapel. This sounds big, but it wasn't. You could tell that each space was totally utilized. Three bedrooms were at one end of the house and shared a bath, and two more were at the other end. The chapel was a converted library where six chairs had

been placed in a semicircle facing a table, which held a prayer book. A crucifix hung on the wall along with a lit candle. It was a quiet, peaceful room.

The whole atmosphere seemed so normal. I don't know what this ignorant Protestant (me) was expecting. I guess I just thought a nun's life would be uniquely different, set apart. I wanted to put the whole lot on a pedestal, but then how could they be true to their calling? This order was meant to live among the people and to help the poor.

My husband called about 7:30 and asked to be connected to Lucy's room. I'd failed to tell Sister Joan that I'd left the number but had not given my location. She thought that was hilarious. I don't know what he thought. "You're where?" Later I learned that there'd been a great discussion between him and some of the children, trying to figure out what I was up to now. Was I going to become a nun or what?

The answer is a resounding "no." That is not my calling, but was, however, profoundly interesting. One of the main take-home values for me has been the idea of "living in community." All day long, this phrase would pop up. I didn't quite understand it and probably still don't completely. During our marathon talks, little vignettes of this shared community living would unfold - how it was discussed and decided every three months who cleaned which room, who cut the grass, who grocery shopped, who cooked, who picked out the new rug and wall colors. I could tell these decisions were a

little bit bigger deals than at our house, because every decision was made in community. Meals were preferably eaten in community. Leisure time after dinner was spent in community. Prayers and worship were done in community. Problems were solved in community.

Help! What would they do with a periodic benevolent dictator like me, someone who likes to do things by myself and my way? Obviously Lucy would not fit in. The whole point is they are trying to get away from the me-my-mine syndrome of which I seem to be a proponent. They're more into Thee-Thy-Thine. I believe their way allows the Lord to reign more readily. Ooow, is this getting to be a bit uncomfortable?

I needed to learn about this community thing, especially with my home now being occupied only by adults. Each one of us, parents and adult children alike, needs a space where no one enters unless invited. We need also to come together more often and live more in community. We need more discussion time, where decisions that affect all of us are jointly made. Conflicts need more open discussion and airing and conclusion, with everyone taking part and everyone winning.

Oh, I pray that our home becomes more of a haven for adult community living where the Spirit of our Lord has more room to move and our Landlord is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Might your home, Pilgrim, need to be under new Management, too? Just a thought.

*I am, your sister in Christ, Lucy,
prayerfully growing in community,
Lucy*