

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

I received four gifts, which I never want to forget. Three of the presents looked very similar from afar, but they are all hugs. Two were reconciliation hugs. It's very hard to humbly admit to you that there were two relationships in my life that were out of whack. It's hard to show and tell that to you, Pilgrim.

Reconciliation is big time, hard, important, Christian work. For me, it was possibly one of the most difficult to achieve. It is a pearl of great price. It is worth every effort, whatever it takes, to get accomplished. Reconciliation. I believe it is only by the grace of God that two willing broken, loving people who yearn and turn and face each other once more, with forgiveness in their hearts, can come into a reconciliation embrace.

Such a hug has an entirely different feel. It is longer lasting, yet it has no possessive clinginess to it. It is not stifling or debilitating. It is freeing and you can sense this new freedom, for there's a new space within the embrace. - There's room for God. - There are tears. - A breath of fresh air and a revival seem to take place. There's new life, healthier life, and there's a new hope. I do believe that broken relationships, when mended by the glue of grace and humility and forgiveness and love, can make for a better, more whole relationship than ever dreamed possible.

As Christians, we should rejoice always when broken relationships have been made whole.

For Jesus said:

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23-24 NIV

And Saint Paul said:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God!"

2 Corinthians 5:17-20 NIV

Need I say more, except, "Thank you, Lord, for these two gifts."

The remaining gifts, I had to name these. I have to call them "home hugs." A home hug is a fill-in-the-blank hug. It's a whole hug. It's how I believe we'll feel on the other side of life when we are united with our Lord Jesus and our loved ones. It will be a complete holy hold.

Like when my friend Carol unexpectedly came and gave me a home hug. I love this lady. She is one of my dearest friends. We complement each other. We've shared our life stories completely. She

stretches me and encourages me on my pilgrim walk, and I do the same for her. She is a gift. She now lives in Pennsylvania. We see each other seldom, but I miss her. I didn't realize just how much until she unexpectedly appeared and gave me that home hug. Talk about crying - we couldn't stop! It wasn't a teary, quiet, ladylike cry such as a reconciliation hug fosters. It rather, was an all-out bawling and shakily clutching of each other.

We were together less than thirty minutes, and then she had to leave. We don't know when we'll see each other again - but we will. That's the important point to remember - we will. Either here or on the other side - we will. And home hugs powerfully remind us of that. Loved ones do cling together. They complete and complement each other. They fill each other up. Love is supposed to be a communal thing. Christ knows that. He created us that way. Love does come together, all love. I believe we will be made whole in Him, our Lord, and we'll share this wholeness through His love with those we love.

And now, Pilgrim, I need a drum roll, please, for the last and final gift. It is this - that I'd like to share:

"I LOVE YOU"

What?

"I LOVE YOU."

A few months ago the phone rang. I answered it and a lady whom I'd never met or heard of said she didn't know me. I agreed. Then she said she had been attending a seminar at her church, which was being led by a lady from Washington, D. C. She said that

on the first night of the week, the lady had said she had a prophecy for a Lucy and was there a Lucy in the audience? There was none. The phone caller said she and her friend had been praying all week, and they thought that I was that Lucy - that the message was for me. She said the lady from Washington, D. C. was leaving the next day and was it possible for me to come and see her.

So, I said, "Yes."

The next day I drove to an adorable yellow house. I knocked on the door a little apprehensively. I was greeted by three delightfully, normal-looking ladies. Nothing seemed unusual. I don't know what I was expecting. I do believe in all of the Fruits and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. I know God's unknown ways are far richer than we can ever perceive. No boundaries or limits pertain to Him. It's just, in my rather conservative traditional Christian background, I knew I was walking on new turf. We sat down and warmly visited as if old, lost and re-found friends. The lady from Washington said this was also a new experience for her. She didn't know who I was or anything about me or my family or my background. She'd received a prophecy before, but never for an unknown person, and all she knew now was that this one was for Lucy in Montgomery. She'd received the message a week before. She went straight to talk to her pastor, for she thought it was so peculiar. After she relayed it to him, he said that he'd experienced a similar situation, and in his case the name had been Lucy. She was shocked. She had mentioned my name, and she took that as a strong affirmation that, yes, she was to go and find Lucy in

Montgomery and give her the message, and that's exactly what she did.

And the message was . . .

Another drum roll, please! She said she knew it sounded silly, but that was what she was to tell me -

"I LOVE LUCY."

What?

That's right!

"I LOVE LUCY."

She smiled. I smiled. We prayed, gave each other a hug, and then I left.

The reason, Pilgrim, I'm sharing it is that I believe it is the most important gift received. I believe it's just as much for you as it is for me. It is the one I want to take to heart and pray you also choose to store it away. It is the single, most important message of all - "GOD LOVES US."

Four presents received. Three hugs - and the best, an "I LOVE YOU."

You're welcome to take them home and to store them in your heart, for I think that is where they're supposed to live - in each one of us.

Wasn't that what Jesus was all about?

And God said: to you, to me, to all of us, through the cross,

"I LOVE YOU!"

Your sister in Christ,

Lucy

