

*Come Holy Spirit  
Use me to Your glory*

*Precious Pilgrim,*

*Last January my mama, sister, daughter, daughter-in-law, and I went to Bath, England for a week of flower arranging lessons with Sheila McQueen. Mama, my sister, and I had been there the previous year and it was fun to have the younger girls join us. It also was good to be going back for it helped to fill in some sorrowful memories, for my grandmother had died during our last visit. It had really been frustrating for us not to be able to attend her funeral. Families are supposed to get together when loved ones die. We are to hug and to hold each other up in our time of grief.*

*My grandmother was my best friend, my confidante. I was her namesake. She lived with us during all of my formative years. Our lives have been uncannily parallel. She was married in the garden of her home to a widower with three children. Two generations later, I was married in the garden of my home to a widower with three children. Upon marriage, she moved from Montgomery, Alabama to Birmingham, Alabama. Upon marriage, I moved from Birmingham, Alabama to Montgomery, Alabama. Besides this, I loved her and she loved me. We enjoyed being with each other. I wanted and needed desperately to attend her funeral, but that was not possible.*

*Instead, my sister and I stayed up most of the night in*

*our bedroom reminiscing, and then after we figured out with the time change when the funeral was taking place, we went to the Bath Cathedral. It was closing time, but we explained to the guard our loss and our need to be in prayer at this particular time. He kindly let us into the little side chapel, and there we prayed. It was comforting, but somehow not complete.*

*As I write to you at this very moment, I realize the completeness came later; it came the very next year and was accomplished by a hug, that's right, a hug. And it's that hug I'm getting ready to tell you about. I wasn't even planning to mention Grandma's death, for I didn't comprehend the connection until just now as I write. The gift -- let me quickly get to the gift and see if it doesn't make sense.*

*Now let's see if I can get back on track where I thought I wanted to go. Taynton. The gift was received in Taynton, England. This tiny Cotswold town is located one and a half miles from Burford. My sister-in-law, Kay, and I have spent almost two months there, one in the summer of 1991 and the other in 1992, in an old converted eighteenth-century barn we rented. During part of the first year's visit, we attended the C.S. Lewis Institute at Keble College in Oxford. We'd get up every morning and drive 45 minutes to classes and then rush home and write. Madeleine L'Engle was our creative writing teacher. I'd just started the publishing company and finished the first book, so the timing seemed uncannily appropriate. It was the*

*most unbelievable experience. Even to write about it now seems unreal. We lived on Stilton cheese and tea and salads. We giggled and laughed and enjoyed ourselves immensely.*

*That Sabbatical summer, plus the following one, will always stand out in my life. I can close my eyes right now and picture the barn and every little room in it. I can envision the furniture, the books, the china, the placemats. And I can see Rosey, the gardener, with her incredible hands. She was Austrian. Her hair was pulled back into a bun with wisps falling and encircling her angelic, ageless face. As she'd dig in the garden, she'd share one of her incredible life stories and the wisdom she'd gleaned. She was almost 80 and I believe one of the most balanced, Franciscan-like persons I've ever met. She made tarnished things shine, garbage became compost, seeds were tenderly tended into blossoms. I admired Rosey.*

*The second year we were there, at 6:30 each morning I'd walk 1-1/2 miles to the Burford Cathedral to attend Morning Prayer and then write and reflect on one of the meditations of St. Francis de Sales from his book, Introduction to the Devout Life. Then I'd walk home. It was a very meaningful discipline. The memory I wish to cherish most was the day it rained. I wore Rosey's green Wellington boots back and forth on the footpath to Burford. They fit perfectly. I liked wearing them and, as you can tell, I also liked Rosey. Knowing her has enriched my life. Pilgrim, have you met such a person -- the one who enriches, rather than depletes?*

*Last summer we didn't get to go to Taynton, and I don't know when or if I'll ever get to spend another summer there. And that's OK. It really is. I know how fortunate I've already been. Last January I knew I wasn't going to get to go, so when my sister said she'd leave the flower lessons for the day and travel with me to Taynton, I jumped at her offer. She'd visited us there the first summer. I knew she loved it, too, but I was totally taken aback by her generous offer. It was a two-and-a-half-hour drive each way. We wouldn't get to stay long at all, plus we didn't know who was occupying the barn or whether they'd even let us in. It was a crazy, harebrained idea - to rent a car and driver and go on this wild goose chase expedition. It didn't make sense, but we did it nevertheless.*

*And thank you, sister Mary, for going, but that's where I received my first home hug. That's right, a home hug. Let me describe this scenario. When we arrived, the barn door was wide open. I called out and Rosey came running and she gave me the most incredible embrace I've ever received. The chance of Rosey who lived an hour away and only worked one day a week in the winter to have been standing there, giving me a hug at that very moment was a one-in-a-million shot. I shouldn't have been there and neither should she. The odds of our lives even crossing again on this side were less than slight. We both knew it and we both felt it. That's why that hug was so incredible. A home hug is a fill-in-the-blank hug. It's a whole hug. That's how I believe we'll feel on the other side of life*

*when we are united with our Lord Jesus. And now I poignantly realize that's how it will be when Grandma and all those whom I love and I will once again be reunited. It will all be complete. I'm looking forward, Pilgrim, to that time.*

*I am your sister in Christ,*

*Lucy,*

*looking forward to many a home hug,  
including one possibly from you, Pilgrim.  
God bless.*