

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

If I had to be confined to one place on earth and had the choice of its location, I would choose, without a doubt, the faded, two-cushioned sofa at the lake. It's usually always available to me, even if we have a full house, because it's too short for most anyone else to stretch out on. There are definitely some advantages of being 5' 2".

It sits perpendicular to the window with the best view of the lake. Your eyes have to first gaze on the stone patio, where birds, lizards, frogs, and dogs usually congregate, then on through to dogwood and pine trees, and finally to the water. It's usually the most fun feature to watch, for it's ever changing. Often I try to tiptoe down the stairs from our bedroom to watch a sunrise. I never know until it shines its first light whether we'll have white caps or calm. It's only then I can know what the day's activities might include, whether it will be a sailing or sunning or slumbering day. It's like experiencing a child's Christmas morning delight each time I have this opportunity.

My choice of all choices, is to wake up ten minutes before sunrise, feel my way in the dark down to the kitchen, turn on the light, fix a cup of coffee, and then go and sit on the "love" seat and watch and wait for the show to begin. They are never

a disappointment - always different - but never disappointing. Of course, I have my favorite versions, but all are acceptable.

It's from this vantage point that I wait and write to you, Pilgrim, today. It's an unusual morning. The whole outside world is engulfed in a thick fog. Occasionally there'll be days with spots of fog in the coves of the lake; and even more unusual are days when the entire lake is hidden. It's unheard of for the entire environment to take on an English atmosphere such as is now occurring. And a perfect backdrop to notice the whole world around all seems more vivid and more alive somehow.

As I look out onto this glorious spring world, where dogwoods are popping out and butterflies have once more taken flight; where birds are singing, each one a uniquely different tune; where yellow jasmine seems to have been strung throughout the trees, floating garland-like from tree to tree, as if in celebration of this new season of life.

I cannot help but think and rejoice and give thanks to the Lord for His creative diversity. And it brings to mind some of this year's activities. It has been my delightful observation over the last year to also witness and rejoice in the richness of the variety, the grand diversity of Christ's Church.

I'll never forget the three traditions under one roof, which I experienced this past year in Jerusalem at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Ethiopian. I'll never forget going to a Roman Catholic Mass

with a friend - this year - and a Baptist women's retreat with Ann Bearden - this year. I'll never forget having the privilege of speaking to three different denominational churches - this year. The decors were varied along with many of the traditions, but the reality of the Living Lord Jesus Christ being worshipped and proclaimed King was prevalent in each instance. Even in the cases where there were language and cultural and societal barriers, I could always sense by the demeanor of the attendees that Jesus Christ was being worshipped and glorified by those gathered faithful.

Throughout the Church body this decade has been proclaimed the "Decade of Evangelism," but how can we evangelize to people of other faiths if we can't even communicate or accept the traditional differences within our own body? As far as that goes, often we have a problem communicating and accepting our own hometown churches, even ones located on the same block.

The Decade of Evangelism. Are we the body united enough through our love of Christ Jesus to be powerfully calling others into His dance? Are we allowing for the differences, for the drumbeats or bells or ripples that each one of our lives seems to uniquely produce? The diversity in denominations is just one more glorious example of our Creator Father God and His Son and His Holy Spirit at work.

"And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love," as that

grand old hymn goes. I've tried to start catching myself when I begin asking, "What denomination are you?" or "What church do you attend?" A better question might be, "Pilgrim, are you one of my brothers and sisters in Christ?" Then we could possibly get on to more important, kingdom-building subjects. When I was growing up, there was a popular pin worn by many in our church that said, "I AM an Episcopalian." I wore mine proudly. Once I was asked by one of my classmates what was a 1:00 a.m. Episcopalian." In other words, did I only attend church at this particular hour? She already thought we were a little weird because we got to miss school on Good Friday, and nobody else did except the Catholics. That pin wasn't a relevant kingdom builder. Sometimes denominational differences can act as barriers to the building - not always, but sometimes. Instead, they should act as grand avenues in which we can individually express our love for our Lord Jesus: avenues, ways, paths, on our pilgrimages and our journeys. The denominational road we take won't earn or determine our eternal home, just as our deeds won't. It's the One we follow, our Lord Jesus Christ, who has carved that spot for us.

The good news is that we are all Christians, diverse and uniquely designed. Each one of us yearns to worship and praise and pray and give thanks and glory to our Lord God.

Denominations allow for diversity. That's all well and good and as it should be, but they're not meant for division.

We must all join hands and circle up and dance the dance that our Lord Jesus intended us to dance to His kingdom. It's not to be a "line dance," where we're all to do the same step at the same time. That would be boring and, thank the dear Lord, nothing godly has ever had that quality stuck to it. So watch out. If we start acting alike and looking alike, know something's wrong. Diverse, yes. Divided, no. Diverse looks more like the Divine's been actively present.

Now, let's circle up. Honor your partner. Join hands and circle to the right. Let's Do Sí Do your partner, then Do Sí Do your neighbor, then Promenade your partner home. That's where we're all to yearn to go. We need to continually be sure that our partner, our Life's Partner, is our Lord Jesus Christ. We need continually, daily, hourly, to check to be sure that He is in the lead and not us.

Peace, Pilgrim, peace. "What denomination are you?" "What church do you attend?" Oh, no, I forgot. The question for the day is, "Pilgrim, are you one of my brothers and sisters in Christ?" I hope so. Now, we can go do some kingdom building together. Together may we proclaim our Lord's Love to the world. Peace.

Your sister in Christ,

Lucy