

*Come Holy Spirit  
Use me to Your glory*

*Precious Pilgrim,*

*Question: What does one do when one is bitten by a ferret?*

*Answer: One gets back on the protective Rock of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*As I rounded the corner to the church, I noticed that there were no cars. This was not a good sign. I tried the Clanton Street entrance, and it was locked. Boy, was I disappointed. There's nothing worse than being locked out of your own church or, for that matter, any church, when you're dying to enter. Fortunately, in a few minutes Mary Robin arrived. Although she was also keyless, it was nice to have someone else to share in the disappointment. She suggested that we go across the street to her home and read the service there together.*

*This we did and it went flawlessly, except that halfway through I yelled out an "Ow!" for Mo, her pet ferret, had bitten me. Mary Robin was mortified. I assured her that I was fine. Mo, sensing that he'd made a direct hit, slunk smugly away, and we continued our service.*

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*The next day I called my mama as we were driving from Cullman to Tuscaloosa campaigning. She answered the phone and sounded noticeably upset. A friend of hers had just called to report that she had been called by a telephone survey, supposedly doing political polling. In actuality, it was part of a statewide, paid slur campaign against my husband sponsored by an opponent. Mama was livid. I tried to appease her. I knew the "fun" was just beginning, and we had to be thick-skinned and armored. Just like after being bitten by that ferret, I knew we had to keep on keeping on with our eyes continually constantly on the Lord. He is our Rock. He is our Fortress.*

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*This morning I was met by another slam-dunk. A fellow parishioner informed me that his wife was now working full time for one of our opponents. He mentioned that he had worn one of his candidate's t-shirts at a golf tournament that past weekend. He said that people were surprised at his support, but actually he'd been this man's fan for the past five years.*

*Fortunately at the time I was sitting on the floor, so I didn't fall down, for I was floored. Although not an intentional injury, it felt like that ferret bite. It hurt, for I was*

*tired; I was worried; I was vulnerable. So what did we do? We got up, went to the chapel and prayed.*

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*The appointed Psalm for the day just happened to be Psalm 59 and it helped me regain my footing. It's known as the Petition for Deliverance from Violent Men. Hmmm. I inwardly smiled as we read the Psalm responsively. It felt g-r-r-reat! It was like receiving a cool, soothing balm on a festering sore. "Yea, David really understands where I'm coming from! He knows. He's been there!" I was thinking to myself.*

*When we're hurting, when we're down, when we're worried, we don't need someone with a magic wand to come along and try to "fix it and make it better." I know. I've repeatedly, unsuccessfully tried doing just that.*

*Instead, what seems to help most when we're hurting or feeling unjustly attacked is for a compassionate friend to come and just be there in our pain. It's especially helpful if that friend has also experienced a similar situation. That's why King David right then and there, on that particular day, was my hero. That's also why I think the organization that deals with one of the hardest hurts there is, the death of a child, is*

*called "Compassionate Friends." They understand the healing helpfulness of shared experiences.*

*My first campaign assignment for the day was to go to the coliseum and give out flyers to 2,000 senior citizens. Also present was a parishioner giving out flyers for her candidate. She was friendly. I was fakely friendly. (Lord forgive.) Inside myself I found competition building up, and that green-eyed, bile-like competition was leaving quite an aftertaste. Was this sister in Christ my enemy? I was ashamed of myself. Later I called and asked for her forgiveness. Enemy? No. Sister in Christ? Yes.*

*But then...but then, over the next week I kept running into some of the competition, the ones who'd been spreading lies. I'd even been an eyewitness to some of the falsehoods, and it seemed as if venom was coming out of their mouths—slimy, sticky, delivered with a sleazy smile. It gave me the creeps. Just how far would one go to win? Never in my protected life had I seen or experienced such behavior.*

*What was I to do? Continually read David's Psalms, the ones that were addressed to his enemies? Was I to gather my little family and all our relatives and everyone else who cared about us, even those acquaintances who were concerned by the dirty slander and run away and flee? Should we go hole up in a cave somewhere the way David did until this campaign blows over?*

*No, I turned to the Compassionate Friend, who is the only true and complete Compassionate Friend. Who is the one who has experienced all human hurts, all human trials and tribulations? I believe it is only our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Oh sure, King David and his empathetic psalm helped me for a little while this morning, but just as his words drifted from my memory, so did his compassion. Only Jesus stays. Only His Holy Spirit abides, comforts, and helps continually.*

*And what does Jesus say we are to do about our enemies? Love them. What? Love them. But that's impossible; at least I've found it impossible—that is, in my own strength. I cannot pray for my enemies—I know, I've tried. But I can get on my knees and say, "Father God, please help me. I want to follow Your Son. He said we are to love our enemies. Will You send Your Holy Spirit to help?"*

*He does.*

*Amazing grace.*

*Precious Pilgrim, do you have any enemies? Do you have anyone in your life that you detest so much that your feelings, if they were being measured, would register quite close to the HATE rating? Goodness, what a heavy burden. It can become debilitating and eventually even immobilizing. That emotion can cripple you so that it can stifle all other relationships, even the most important one, ours with our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*As I write to you this day, the shadow of a cross made by the light shining through the windowpane lies across this page.*

*This image strongly speaks to me. It reminds me that we are a people set apart, different. It reminds me that we are to become holy and sanctified, not by our own strength, thank the dear Lord, for that would be hopelessly impossible, but the strength of our Living Lord Jesus Christ and by the guidance of His Holy Spirit.*

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*I am*

*With love,*

*Your sister in Christ,*

*Lucy*