

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious, Precious Pilgrim,

My husband and I are in Beaver Creek, Colorado. I'm having the most fun sitting outside on our condo porch. We must be located right on a teaching slope, for almost every skier I've witnessed is partnered with a blue-jacketed ski school instructor.

I saw a tiny skier holding onto a pink rope, which was held by a teacher. This tiny tot would sometimes be behind -- sometimes be in front of this patient man. She'd fall. He'd pick her up. She'd fall. He'd pick her up, brush her off and set her back straight. She'd fall and he'd pick her up into his arms and give her a big hug and then place her softly down. Each pick-up was accompanied by words of encouragement. I could not get over this gentle scenario. Finally, I opened the door and yelled, "How old is she?" He yelled back, "Three." I told him he was a wonderful teacher and he said, "Thanks."

I wanted to hear, to listen, to learn more about this world of encouragement. So that's why I've plopped myself down to enjoy, watch, and learn. What's so marvelous is that because of the topography, I can hear conversations going on all over the place. I am surrounded by mountains and the sounds seem to be bouncing off of them. "Here you go." "Perfect." "Good." "Excellent." "You did it." "Wheel!" Isn't that a marvelous symphony?

What I want to write to you is the best technique of encouragingly how to teach. The one who is more experienced goes ahead and then encourages the less experienced to follow in his or her tracks as closely as possible. It's very easy to evaluate when your path is being made in the snow, but a little bit harder if it's along life's journey. That's why I find reading the Bible, reading stories of saints helps.

Uh-oh, my mind just skipped. It's been doing that ever since the fire. So now, this part of your letter is totally off the point and probably irrelevant, but what I don't want to forget is the lessons I've learned the past ten days since our house fire. I want to remember that when there is a trauma, what feels best are hugs and listening. I want to remember when hurting to allow others to minister to me, not to jump in with a pat statement of, "Fine. We are blessed." when asked how you are doing for it blocks communication. It's like dropping a barricade between the one hurting and the one reaching out to help. There is hurt. There is pain with a loss. Acknowledging it is so much better in the long run.

With the house fire, it's been so interesting to receive the various reachings-out. Some people were not allowed to help me heal, for I'd drop a platitudinal barricade and they would retreat. Others were great at expressing the loss, but would cancel the gift by sticking on a cheer or telling their own story. What I needed at the time was for him or her to just come along the side of me where I was in my situation, which was in

pain. I wasn't quite ready to jump up and give the world a cheer.

It's a real interesting emotional roller coaster.

Sometimes I'm fine. Sometimes I'm not. I've been through tragedies before. This is not so much a tragedy as a real hurt. The house can be rebuilt, whereas people can't. I know that, but I must allow myself to grieve. I tried the other way of denial and it takes twice the time to heal because you are not really dealing in truth.

I want to remember the little acts of kindness that really touched, like an unknown neighbor who brought a plastic cupful of white sasanqua flowers from her garden and a little note. Notes, little notes, some on scraps of paper left at the back door or dropped in the mail or left on the phone. They weren't long or elaborate, which was good, for my concentration was gone, but just said, "I'm sorry."

I want to remember to be sure and give eye contact. It was so interesting to me on the Sunday after the fire. I sang in the choir as always and as the people came up for Holy Communion, some would lean over and give me a little pat and a whisper, "I'm sorry." It was just a little thing, but it meant so much. I want to remember that it doesn't matter what one says, the people or the person is probably in shock and won't even remember, but he or she will remember who was there. I want to remember this experience and remember to go to the house of the hurting, to the funerals, to the hospitals, to

give a hug, to give a listening ear and to allow the one in pain to talk and to spill their guts, shed their tears.

That's what Jesus would do over and over again. He met the people where they were in their brokenness. We are to do the same. We are to be Christ's hands and feet and eyes and ears to each other, especially in the days of pain.

I seem to have gotten sidetracked on this letter. Please forgive. As I said, my mind is still skipping like a bouncing ball. I think it's part of shock.

I'd also like to share a few other incredible gifts gleaned thus far. It was a gift of tender mercy that my husband and I weren't at home, but in Atlanta, so we didn't have to watch the flames. It had been months since we'd been away together. I don't think that just happened.

For days prior to the fire my heart's prayers had been about simplicity. I don't remember ever being so pressed by a theme. I'd wake up during the night. It would float in all during the day - simplicity. I think the Holy Spirit was preparing me.

I don't want to forget how strongly it came to me the day after the fire what our Christmas card was to be. It was to be the boarded-up front door with wreaths and a light angel overhead. The inside inscription of the card would say:

"Lo, I am with you always..."

That is all joy and peace.

I took the picture with a disposable camera and within two days the cards were made and mailed.

The last gift I want to mention is Baba's present. Baba, my dear friend from Troy, Alabama, called about two days after the fire and said, "Did you get my gift?" "What gift?" She said the one she had bought me while visiting New York City. I said, "No." I thought this a little odd, for we don't often exchange presents. The friendship is enough of a present. She said she'd check with UPS and she bet that they had tried to deliver it the day of the fire. They had. She thought it was very interesting that when she saw this item, she knew she was to send it to me. It came the next day after our conversation. It was a huge rainbow-like cross necklace. The outlined shape was etched silver and the whole inside was one colored gemstone after another - like a rainbow. It has no back so you can hold it up next to the light so the glorious colors dance. Precious. Wonderful.

A cross in a fire is a perfect gift - any cross in any life-bumping, fire-like experience is a perfect gift.

*I am your encouraged sister in Christ,
Lucy*