

Come Holy Spirit  
Use me to Your glory

*Miami, Florida*

*Precious Pilgrim,*

*I'm in Miami with my daughter, Stuart. We're at a spa for a week. But today I took the day off. I'm on a day retreat. I'm spending it at All Angels Episcopal Church. My daughter Stuart and I went to church here Sunday. We were given its name and address by the front desk of the hotel as being the nearest one. The church is a wonderfully delightful environment. The building is A-frame with lowered glass windows on the sides. The decor is simple: white walls, wooden rafters and pews. The only decorations are pictures of angels and a cross at the front and a wonderful picture of the Annunciation at the back.*

*One of the joys of this church is that the outside and inside environment don't seem to be separated. This holy quiet is surrounded by the busy, much like the holy that dwells in us, even in our busyness.*

*Another joy is that there is a preschool, which is part of the facility. Besides the noises of a big city like Miami -- airplanes, traffic, building equipment -- I've been surrounded occasionally by giggles and laughter of three- and four-year-olds. At the beginning of the day, I heard one mother coaxing her young son with, "You've got to go to school if you want to go to the party." I think that applies to us too. We've got to participate totally in this earthly learning ground if we want*

*to go to the eternal heavenly party.*

*The hospitality at the church has been heavenly. After attending Sunday's service, I called to ask if it would be all right if I spent the day here on retreat. Having received an affirmative answer, I arrived this morning at 8:00 and will leave this afternoon at 5:00. I've been sitting, reading, writing, praying, listening, and walking. I've been attending their 12 Noon Ash Wednesday service. Today is the first day of the church's penitential season called Lent, the forty days before Easter. So here I am sitting in the back of this church writing to you. And what am I to say? Do you remember that children's song?*

*"Ring around the roses,  
A Pocket full of posies  
Ashes, ashes, we all fall down.  
Ashes, ashes, we all fall down."*

*Just a little while ago, I was once again "marked as Christ's own," as they say at our baptism. This time I was marked with a cross of ashes put on my forehead as the minister said, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return."*

*I understand this statement better than I used to for I've attended at least four funerals where the bodies had been cremated. As an altar guild member, that's one who prepares our church for services, I once was setting up Holy Communion in the little altar guild room while the urn of the ashes of the*

*dear, dear, sainted lady who taught me how to do altar duty, sat on the counter waiting to be interred in the church garden. That might sound odd or disrespectful, but actually it was a powerfully humbling and moving gift. I felt like she gave me one more graduate level lesson. Remember, Lucy, you're no big deal. Ashes, my dear, just ashes. By God's grace. Ashes, ah yes. I've thought about ashes, even more so recently because of our house fire. Ashes. They're OK. That's the good news, the grace. They are OK. The humility in ashes is grand. It's light. It's airy. It's freeing. We're no big deal. I'm no big deal except in the Lord. Once we come to terms with our mortality, the fear floats away. The dance with Him can be a more joyful one.*

*Last week, I went with a dear friend to see a week-old baby lamb at my father-in-law's. I'd heard about this special creature and wanted to visit. The lamb is a twin and had been rejected by her mother who cared totally for her sickly sibling. She had been humanly raised and thus was very friendly. She instantly came up to us and nuzzled us and then as we were leaving, she did one of those stand-in-place jumps like only a little lamb can do. It's a prance, a jump-up-dance. She was so filled with glee that she had to float off the ground and do a "joy-jump." A joy-jump!*

*Oh, and that's what I want to do. I want to become so aware of the love of Jesus that I'll be doing spiritual "joy-jumps" all day long. And it seems to me that one of the first orders of*

*business to get this buoyancy, is to cut the ropes that bind.*

*Bind. What binds you to this earth? Keeps your eyes focused on things besides Him? What makes you feel heavy, burdened, worried? My list is pretty long. This season, by the grace of God, I pray that some of those binding ropes will be severed. I can't do it on my own, neither can you. We can do it, however, by the grace of God and the help of His Holy Spirit.*

*A good place to start, it seems to me on this day, is to try and get a little more comfortable with our mortality. If you are fearful of dying -- say it -- pray it -- tell the One who loves you like no other One. Take that fear to Him along with any others that are holding you down. May our Lord Jesus Christ loosen those bindings so that we can join on the joyful "joy-jumps" that His little lambs are supposed to be daily performing.*

*I am your sister in Christ and jumping for joy,  
Lucy*

*P.S. Before I leave this hallowed place, I don't want to forget Billy. He was the five-year-old little boy who yelled out at the altar rail to the minister, "Don't forget me." She, located at the other end of the rail, without even turning, without even missing a beat, continued placing the ashes on the person in front of her and yelled out, "I won't, Billy."*

*Our Lord knows our name, our wants, our needs. "Hey Lord, don't forget me." "I won't, little joy-jumper," He seems to*

*be daily saying.*

*And the final scene I'd like to remember is hearing one lady say in church, "Sometimes it's just more than we can handle." The friend responded by placing an arm around her shoulder. That was a tender scene. One Christian ministering to another Christian. Often life does give us more than we can handle and it's only by God's grace and the embrace of a friend that we can make it through. One friend can remind us of our eternal Friend. Peace, Precious Pilgrim, peace.*

*We are not alone.*

*We are loved by Love.*

*May this time be one*

*of letting go,*

*so that we can*

*join those lambs in a*

*"joy-jump," too!*