

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

*“Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me,
bless His Holy name.” The celebration continues. My husband
and I are on an airplane on the way home from Miami and
that song keeps playing in my heart. We had a grand trip. He
just read to me out of Joe’s Restaurant Cookbook how the key
players, the employees and employers, eat together at 5:00 PM
everyday before this world-renowned Miami Beach restaurant
opens. I bet this is a prime factor in the success of this 80+
year-old establishment.*

*The food is superb, especially the stone crabs and key lime
pie. It’s been one of our favorite restaurants since we lived in
Miami in the 70’s. On this trip we ate there twice in four days.
The key to its success is not the food, though that is certainly
excellent. Great restaurants come and go. I bet the
community built between employees, employers, and clientele
has more to do with it. This reality is indicated in their
cookbook, for there are more pictures and comments about the
people than about the recipes. A community had been built, I
bet more as a result of their shared daily meal as opposed to
their working together. Community and shared meals seem to
go hand in hand, don’t you think? It’s a grand device for
community building.*

In the church, we also have a community building Meal offered often -- our Lord's Supper. I am never more aware of this cosmic community of which we belong than when I attend.

But first, let me tell you what we did last night. We went to the Miami Heat basketball game. It was fun. They won. I am a fan at any sporting event, even if I don't understand the rules, for they are always prime people-watching places. Last night was no exception. It was good, clean, family fun.

For me, the highlight of the night was that it was pouring down rain when it was time to leave. There was no way around it, for it was obviously going to be a downpour and not a short shower. We hadn't come prepared for such inclement weather. We'd forgotten how quickly the storms can come up in this tropical climate. So, we held hands and walked, not ran, to the car. It was lovely. This downtown area is well lit. The rain became shining, dancing diamonds. We were soaked to the bone, but it was warm and delightful and refreshing.

This morning, I quietly got dressed in the dark and tiptoed out of our hotel room. I'd called the concierge earlier to find the location of the nearest church and the availability of service. Much to my delight, it was within walking distance, about three blocks away, and its grounds were actually being used as part of the Coconut Grove art festival that we attended the day before.

I chose to attend the 8:00 AM service. As I walked to the church, the artists were arriving at their festival booths. There

was a lot of setting up and rearranging and getting ready for the day. It was a friendly, warm, county fair-like atmosphere.

Once again, I'd forgotten my umbrella. There were clouds which looked a little iffy. I didn't want to go back to the room, so I did the next best thing. There was a large clean-up crew replacing garbage bags along my designated route. I asked one of the men if I might have a bag in case it rained. He generously agreed.

I arrived at St. Stephen's a little early and much to my surprise and delight, the choir was practicing in the balcony. I quietly strolled around the sanctuary soaking up this hallowed space. To my amazement, there were paintings, along with a few pieces of sculpture, placed around the altar. I thought this seemed a little peculiar. Then, upon reading the bulletin, I learned that this particular service was held annually in celebration of the arts. The sermon, the hymns, the readings, the prayers, all were interwoven into a seamless offering of thanksgiving for God's gift of creativity as expressed in the arts. I don't know why, but it was for me a very emotional, humbling, heart-in-my-throat-type experience. Each part of the service built upon the next with its crescendo being the Holy Communion. As I mentioned earlier, there is no time when I feel the community of Christ and His people more strongly than as at His Supper.

Today it was even more poignant and profound. For the first time, I felt in communion with His little lambs who try to

express their love for Him through the arts. Oh, that was so hard, so good, so humbling. I don't think of myself as an artist or a writer. It's hard for me to pick up this pen and try to write to you daily. You wouldn't believe the negative internal press I've been glopping on myself recently. "What are you doing, Lucy?" You don't have anything to say. No one cares or wants to hear what you have to say, anyway. Your world is so different from most people's, especially in the near future. You don't have time. You're traveling nonstop and then there's the aftermath of the house fire. You're running closer to emotional empty than full. How can you give in such a depleted state? Forget it!"

Those sounds and noises! I know it is only out of emptiness, out of brokenness, out of humility, that I can write. I pray that the Lord will use me to bless you, to encourage you, even if it's just to realize struggling seems to be part of the plan for each one of us.

I remember one of the books that touched me most was by the English writer, Evelyn Underhill. It was made up of her letters. And she struggled. I was shocked. You mean even Evelyn struggled? Even Paul? Even Peter? Even James, John, Mary, Martha, Augustine, Brother Lawrence, Julian, Francis, Corrie? Yeah! That's part of the dance. Maybe some of the best parts come from the struggling, come from the surrendering.

I took these handwritten messy pages, which I'm writing to you and placed them on the side altar after the church

service and prayed for the Lord's blessing. Then I started the walk back to the hotel. Fortunately, it started raining, first just a drizzle and then a real downpour. I got my black plastic garbage bag out and put three holes in it, one for my head and two for my arms, and had a delightful "singing in the rain" walk back.

Peace, my precious Pilgrim, until tomorrow.

*I am your creative, soaked-to-the bone
struggling lamb;*

Lucy

*P.S. If you're one of God's creative creatures, I recommend taking one of your creations to a church and place it on an altar, or a pew, or even on the floor and just say a prayer of thanksgiving and praise. Or, if you have a new song in your heart, go sing it to the church rafters. King David's last psalm, number 150, sums it up pretty well what we are called to do:
"Praise the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary. Praise Him in His mighty heavens. Praise Him for His acts of power. Praise Him for His surpassing greatness. Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet. Praise Him with the harp and lyre. Praise Him with tambourine and dancing. Praise Him with strings and flute. Praise Him with the clash of cymbals. Praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Amen.*