

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

It's 7:00 P.M. England time. I don't know what time it is at home. All I know is that I've been up for days, so this little letter won't be much. My brain's gone to mush 'cause I'm so tired.

My sister-in-law Kay and her friend, Janet, and I arrived and had a leisurely drive to the Cotswolds village of Taynton and then to Kay's converted barn. Then we went to Burford, which is just one-and-a-half miles away, where we had lunch. Then I was brought here to the guesthouse of the Anglican Franciscan Poor Clares Convent in Freeland. Here I will be on a silent retreat till Friday. This will be my third such retreat over the years in this very place. It will be conducted by Sister Michaela, who is a twinkly-eyed, seventyish, Aussie, mother of four, widow, who happens to be a nun. She is a gift. This place is gift. I believe I was led here by the Lord.

As I mentioned, the converted barn in Taynton had become a haven of rest. Kay and I came and rented it for part of three summers. Our visits always included touring around the countryside with family and friends who visited. For me, it always had the added dimension of a spiritual retreat. One year, I walked each morning to Burford for two weeks for the 7:30 morning prayer service at the church and stayed to do a meditation from the classic, Introduction to a Devout Life, by

Francis de Sales. One year, I studied Transformation in Christ, by Dietrich von Hildebrand. But from year one, what I really yearned for was to make a silent retreat. I'd read about such and I thought it was something I really wanted to do. It became a heart's desire. Year before last, I found a Benedictine Convent in Burford and got the nerve to call and ask if they gave directed silent retreats. The guest brother abruptly said, "Yes, but of course we have been solidly booked for months." Lick! Then I got up enough nerve to call back and ask if by chance there were any Franciscans around. He said, "Oh, yes. There is a convent of Poor Clares, which is a cloister of contemplative order, in Freeland which is about fifteen minutes away." I asked for their phone number and immediately called. I spoke very quickly, fearing that if I paused, I might be rejected. I said I wanted to make a silent retreat. Sister Michaela just happened to answer the phone. She checked her schedule and said I was in luck, for there had been a cancellation that very morning and I could come the next day for four days. She said that it was quite extraordinary, for this rarely happened. I smiled to myself. I didn't think it just happened. The Lord was giving me my heart's desire. I did go and it was love at first sight.

This might not translate, but for me, the Barn was always a retreat, a fill-up, drawing inward place. For Kay, on the other hand, it was a broadening spot. She embraced each person she met and each place she discovered. When the Barn

came up for sale, I internally debated whether it should be bought under joint ownership. Silly, but this really was a struggle. The Barn experience had always been a shared one with Kay and I didn't know if I could be a big enough girl to let go of this place.

Deep down inside, I knew that my immediate family would not relish the spot. My group is made up of a bunch of doers, not "be-ers." My husband and daughter had experienced the Barn and they both did just fine for a week, as long as there was a hectic schedule planned.

Kay's family, on the other hand, have Fargo, North Dakota genes from their father and I think those tough, long winters make for better be-ers. So, after internally tossing and turning, turning and tossing, weighing and playing, pretending and lending for days and nights, I mentally gave up the Barn.

Fortunately, Kay didn't realize these tug-o-war games I was personally playing. I knew I needed to let it go and tell her as soon as possible so we could get on with enjoying the rest of our trip and she could start planning the purchase.

I cannot tell you the peace that came with that decision and also the gift--the unexpected grace gift of the convent. It was immediately after mentally relinquishing the Barn that St. Mary's Convent became known, then visited. For life, this will be my haven of rest -- and for the first three years at the Barn, I didn't even know it existed. Contemplative cloistered

Franciscan Poor Clares less than ten miles away.

Extraordinary. God is so good. He is so gracious. I don't think this gift would have ever been discovered unless I had relinquished, let go totally of the Barn.

Is there any person, place or thing to which you are holding? Grasping? Clinging? Sometimes, I believe such a grip locks gifts from the Lord. Let go and see surprises surface - like the convent for me. Of course, a convent might not be to your taste, but that's one of the miracle of miracles about our Lord. He tailor-makes gifts, gives you the secret yearnings of your heart, the ones that only you and He even know about.

I am a happy camper. I'll be back to you. God bless. Before I go, I want to share a scripture that has come to mind. It is Psalm 37, verse 1 through 7 -- Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong. For like the grass, they will soon wither. Like green plants, they will soon die away. Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in Him and He will do this. He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him. He will give you the desires of your heart.

Isn't that incredibly good news? Mine was to go on a silent retreat to a convent in the Cotswolds. Talk about a specific request. That's what our Lord does best. He fulfills

secret heart desires, only the ones you and He share and know about. That's how intimately He knows each one of us. The other verse that clings to my heart in this Psalm is - Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him.

*Sounds like I've got my orders for the next few days.
Shhhh, I must be quiet and listen. I sent you a whisper of love
Your convent-dwelling, silent sister in Christ,
Lucy*

Now, one more time, delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Be still with Him and wait patiently for Him. Shhhh. I love you and He does too. Peace.