

*Come Holy Spirit  
Use me to Your glory*

*Precious Pilgrim,*

*“By the light of the silvery moon.” Soon it will be the dawning of a new day. I seem to be using the Hebraic method of calculating time, sunset to sunset, as I write to you this season. It makes sense to me, as these letters are reflections based on the day’s activities. Somehow, there’s more closure, more finality when you go with this sundown-to-sundown rhythmic routine. It reminds me of the closing of the New York Stock Exchange. I’ve never seen such a crazy world. Each active - no, frantic - day is brought to an end with an obnoxious ringing of a bell. “People, it’s over. You’ve run out of time. Too bad if you’ve bought and sold the wrong stuff. It’s finí for the day. It’s kaput. Au revoir. Hasta la vista. Ciao, baby and goodbye.”*

*Darkness to darkness. For me, it seems to be creating a more reflective, over-the-shoulder gaze on the day before I move on to the next one. And this is good for this reflective season, but as Easter people, I’m glad this is not our normal stance. Give me sunrise to sunrise any other time. It has a more hopeful, future feeling, don’t you think? And we are to be future-facing people, for the best is yet to come.*

*I understand the need, however, to be an occasional cave dweller. It’s good to pull apart and go into an enclosed “dark” where there is no outside distracting stimuli. It’s not my*

*favorite place, no actually, that's not true. It's the most exposed, naked, raw place I know, but it draws me like a magnet. The facades are tenderly scraped off. The games seem to come to a halt. Ideally, the endless wordiness of my brain slows down so there are more spaces of silence to listen. Scary? I'd say so. Control-less? Ideally.*

*Once I went on a four-day retreat to a hermitage, which was a tiny one-room cabin tucked back into the woods of the Benedictine Convent in Cullman, Alabama. This eight-foot by 10-foot room had a bed, bedside table, a rocking chair. There was neither electricity nor running water. I ate only bread and water. I know this might sound a little weird. I made this self-imposed retreat because I had been asked to speak at a conference on the pre-assigned subject of caves, renewal and testament. The only way I knew to possibly try and get in touch with a so-called cave experience was to try and and recreate such an environment. The weather was incredible. It rained continuously. It was ideal for an enclosed cave time. I couldn't have wandered around if I had wanted to. I learned on my first night that I wasn't the only occupant for some precious little creatures had carved a home out right above my bed in the attic. They weren't too noisy. As it lightnined and thundered, my prayers were mainly that the rotting ceiling wouldn't give way and those little unknown furry friends wouldn't plop onto my bed. And I found one tick and numerous spiders. My perfume for this exquisite visit experience*

*was bug spray. The first two nights of this experience I used candles and a kerosene lamp and a flashlight for light. The last twenty-four hours I decided to get tough - all lights out. I spent the four days praying, reading and resting. I read out loud John's gospel, his letters and Revelation. For exercise, I did a little song and dance routine to some of my favorite hymns. There was a feeling of suspended time. There was a slowness about everything. I took off my watch and only occasionally looked at it. There was never a sense of boredom or loneliness. I was never afraid. It was totally a gift - a love offering. I went to be apart with God - to draw nearer to Him. He is nearer than our very breath. It's just that our noisy busy world distracts. Right in front of the little hermitage was a wooden sign, which said, "Ausculta" and I was told that it meant, "Listen" in Latin. Listen, hmmm... For me, I had no mystical experience. There was just a keen sense of who our Father God is and who I am. I am loved by the Beloved, so are you. You are loved by the Beloved. I experienced that still, small voice. There was a calm, a peace, a gentleness.*

*Part of my daily discipline, one which I've been practicing now for almost two years, is called "centering prayer." Each morning, I literally go into a darkened closet and sit and try to be quiet and listen for twenty minutes. Often it is the noisiest part of the day for my mind does not like relinquishing control. On my own, I'll never get it right. In fact, it's not about "getting it right," rather it's about being*

*there in the discipline. All time is God's time. The quiet helps me to acknowledge this fact. I'm not in charge, really I never am. "Sitting" helps me live in this truth. The most important part, and strangely the hardest part, for me is the allowing of love to flow. Beloved to beloved. Oh, it's easy for me to love Him, our Lord, but it's so difficult for me to accept His love. "But, but Lord - I am a sinner. Please turn away from me." He doesn't leave. He never does. Only I do. I'm trying more and more not to run. "Run, run, fast as you can. You can't catch me I'm the gingerbread man." Oh, but He can - our Lord can catch me. He can catch you. He can embrace each one of us - if only we say "yes." And I am trying, trying to learn how.*

*In the little hermitage on one of the walls, there was a little plaque, which said, "Shalom." I hammered a little Jerusalem cross over it, which came from the Mountain of Transfiguration. I was there just a few months ago and went to the cave where Lazarus was called out. As I stood in that claustrophobic spot, I could just imagine Jesus calling, "Lazarus, come out! Lucy, come out!" My precious, precious Pilgrim, come out. What tombs are you stuck in? I think cave dwelling or hermitage dwelling, or centering prayer helps break the silence of our noisy world so that we can really hear our Lord God's loving voice and then become what He intends.*

*Now may our today's visit end by reading 1 Kings 19:11 & 12. And God said, Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by and a great and*

*strong wind rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a still, small voice.*

*Ah, my precious pilgrim, it is my heart's desire to hear that voice more and more. May it be yours also.*

*Now I am your occasionally-closeted,  
cave-dwelling sister in Christ,  
Lucy*

*P.S. Back home, my brother-in-law Tom just phoned. We had a good conversation. I love him and he loves me. I told him all about the retreat and said I had more of an appreciation of my son Will's three-day solo experience during an Outward Bound. Tom said my trip hadn't been an Outward Bound, but rather an inward-bound. I concur. Let's go for more of those inward-bounds. God bless.*