

Precious Pilgrim,

This morning I revisited the world of getting children ready for church. You wake up early (preferably) and do as much of your own dressing as possible. This was made even more challenging than I recall, for I had none of my own supplies. Last night's baby-sitting assignment with two grans had been a self-appointed, spur-of-the-moment one, thus my husband and I failed to pack. I found a new toothbrush in the downstairs bathroom and washed my hair with baby shampoo from the children's upstairs bath. Thus, a beginning had been made before they woke up.

When they rose, I fixed their breakfast, and while they ate and watched a new "Barney" tape, I ran upstairs and gathered their clothes - shoes, tights, undies, diapers, slippers, dresses. Thank the dear Lord for Barney. In my day it was Captain Kangaroo; in my children's, it was Mr. Rogers. Somehow these soothing programs bring on tranquility for all, so that we can calmly accomplish the mission of getting them ready. With them fed and dressed and plugged into "Barney," I went and snooped. Sorry, precious daughter-in-law of mine. I found rollers, hairdryer and makeup. There was a "Good morning" to my husband and I informed him of our plans. We needed to leave at 8:10 and swing by our house. I would put on my dress while he and the grans remained in the running car. Then he would drop us at church. I'd take the children with me from 8:30 to 8:50 as I robed and warmed up with the

choir. At 8:50, I'd take them to their Sunday School rooms and then line up for the choir procession into church. My husband would have from 8:15 to 8:55 to shower, dress, and show up for church. Thank the dear Lord, he was totally cooperative. On some topics, he defers to me - like opera and getting children ready for church.

Everything went pretty much on schedule. Our five-year-old eldest granddaughter was a helpful assistant. She gathered hair bows and jewels to wear. Being a grandmother, I let a few things slide. Beverley did wear her Esmerelda panties under her exquisite pink handmade dress and she also wore her white "Sunday School shoes with bows." They were a little big and I suspected that something was up when she asked if she could wear these as opposed to her plainer, smaller, bow-less ones. "My mama lets me," was pitifully stated, which is a dead giveaway that she doesn't. I then went into the speech that she could put them on and wear them, but when her mama came home, I'd ask her if that was allowed and if she said "No," I would have to spank her for not telling me the truth. (Yes, I said spank! I'm the only one who has spanking permission. Both girls know if I count one, two and get to three before they've minded me, there will be a spanking. Sorry, but that's the only way I know how to do. "Time out" is OK for little things, but for the major, dangerous situations or not telling the truth, you get an old-fashioned, not very hard, clothes on, granny version of a spanking.) Quickly, she

reconsidered and said she didn't wear these shoes. With that true confession, I said, "Thank you" and just for today, because she had told me the truth, she could wear them. Even I, however, put my foot down when she came down with a black and gold headband and a strand of large crystal beads, both from her "dress-up" collection. (I hope she'll save them for me to wear at a later date, when I become, hopefully, an outrageously joyful character.)

How did we do it? How do we do it? Getting children ready for church, for school, for soccer, for football, for baseball, for tennis, for basketball, for gymnastics, for dancing, for choir, for the dentist, for the doctor, for a haircut? Now it just amazes me. As a mother of four, each two-to-two-and-a-half years apart in age, I have no idea. I do know, a lot of the time, you just do the best that you can and some days, that might not be so good.

For example, there are many class photos of my children where their hair was either too long or too short. At the time, I was just glad if they had on sort-of clean clothes. To handle hair, that usually was done a la group. I'd march all of them into a barber, including my precious only daughter, and have their hair cut all at the same time. You didn't have time to make an appointment and usually two could be done at the same time and it was less expensive than at a beauty salon. Also, often we went to the grocery and doctor and clothes and shoe stores en masse. As you can imagine, we'd usually get

waited on rather quickly. The silent "triage" whistle would activate "danger, danger has just entered the premises." The good news was that we moved approximately every three years for the first ten years of our marriage, so the damage done was left behind and soon forgotten. Thank the dear Lord, there was no Internet in those days so that a bulletin couldn't be sent out to the world. Indeed, we had the "Brady Bunch" on TV, who made us look good.

If I had to do it over again, I'd try to be a little more Celtic in my approach. Unfortunately, I didn't even know about the Celts except some vague, dusty information collected in my senior year in high school from an English history class. Actually, even today, I confess my knowledge is not much more enlightened, but I am rather intrigued.

At last week's church camp retreat there were optional workshops each afternoon. An excellent one was given on Celtic Christianity. Since then, I have read a tiny book on Celtic Saints - about St. Patrick, St. Columbo, Aidan, Hild, Moninne and am a fourth of the way through a book on Celtic Christian Spirituality. I am one, you think, I know. The more I read, the more intrigued I become. Keenly aware of our Lord God's immenseness and transcendence, they were busy people, much like us. It was a hard-living time. They incorporated their prayer life in their everyday activities. I love the intimacy, which shines through their prayers - their childlike, comfortable familiarity with their Triune God - Father, Son

and Holy Spirit. There is a prayer for every activity, such as making up your bed, rekindling the morning fire, and banking it at night. Their world was a God-centered one where all is seen in relationship to Him. God, man, nature are seen much more in tune and involved and intertwined with each other.

I love the intimacy and childlike familiarity of the Christian Celts to their God, our God. It rings true to me.

If I had to do it all over again, raising my children as I said, I'd try to be a little more Celtic. It's too late for that group but ah, the grandchildren, that's a different story!

I'd like to end this letter with one of the great Celtic Saint's poems.

St. Patrick's Breastplate

*I bind unto myself today the strong Name of the Trinity,
by invocation of the same, the Three in One, and One in Three.*

*I bind this day to me forever, by the power of faith, Christ's
Incarnation; his baptism in the Jordan river; his death on
cross for my salvation; his bursting from the spiced tomb; his
riding up the heavenly way; his coming at the day of doom; I
bind unto myself today.*

*I bind unto myself the power of the great love of
cherubim; the sweet "Well done" in judgment hour; the service
of the seraphim; confessors' faith, apostles' word, the patriarchs'*

*prayers, the prophets scrolls, all good deeds done unto the Lord,
and purity of virgin souls.*

*I bind unto myself today the virtues of the starlit heaven,
the glorious sun's life-giving ray, the whiteness of the moon at
even, the flashing of the lightning free, the whirling wind's
tempestuous shocks, the stable earth, the deep salt sea, around
the old eternal rocks.*

*I bind unto myself today, the power of God to hold and
lead, his eye to watch, his might to say, his ear to hearken, to
my need, the wisdom of my god to teach, his hand to guide, his
shield to ward, the word of God to give me speech, his heavenly
host to be my guard.*

*Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me,
Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to
comfort and restore me, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of
all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.*

As I said, I think I'm a little bit Celtic.

I am your precious sister in Christ,

Lucy

Might you be a little Celtic too? God bless.