

*Precious Pilgrim,*

*I don't know if I can do this. I don't know if I can write this letter to you but, by God's grace, I'll try. It's almost 9 PM and I'm sitting outside on the stoop at the guesthouse of our home where my husband and I have been living since our house fire. The stars are out. There are nighttime sounds. The earthy smell of dirt is strong because all is dirt as far as I can see because of the reconstruction.*

*I am emotionally drained. It's been an up, down, all-around day. It started off with me leading two busloads of Headstart kindergartners, four-year-olds, to see sheep being sheared at my father-in-law's house. That was fun and exciting. There were over 2,000 children gathered for the event, which included not only the grooming of sheep, but also hayrides and horseshoeing, and refreshments.*

*After showing the way, I went and picked up a dear friend, Mary Barwick. She is a renowned artist and has a real gift for painting angels, sheep, and Noah's Arks. We took on the rich sights of children and sheep and ended our visit in perfection with coffee at her home. This is one of my most favorite places in the whole world. For me, it could not be any more grand at Santa's workshop. Always something is in the making at Mary's.*

*And from there I went and met another dear friend, Madeleine, for lunch. From the time of being with Mary Barwick on, I tried not only to focus on needed activities, but on Daisy, our fourteen-year-old lab. Mary, who is a great lover of animals too, had mentioned that she had had an animal cremated. It was*

*getting so complicated about Daisy and her imminent death. She had cancer and was suffering intensely. I'd taken her back to the vet and her bleeding and scratching had become uncontrollable. It killed me to see her try to lick up her blood for I think she was embarrassed for the mess, even in her pain. I'm glad I was with her the previous twenty-four hours to see what her quality of life had become.*

*The day before, we had tried to coordinate her death and funeral. Two of the children were planning to dig the grave at the lake on Friday. One was in Atlanta and the other was sick with fever. It was getting so complicated. Our main concern was Daisy. It wasn't fair to keep her alive at our convenience. So we went to another plan.*

*A shot was to be given to her to put her to sleep at 4:30 today. The cremation would follow. Her ashes will be placed in the lake where she loved to swim and a plaque will be placed on the dock that will say "Daisy's Fishing Hole."*

*I arrived at the vet's at 4:20 and Daisy was in the green grass yard where she had spent the day. She'd just finished eating a bowl of canned dog food; it's her favorite kind. I went and sat on the ground next to her and just rubbed her and petted her and talked to her and loved on her and prayed over her, and thanking the dear Lord for her, and I cried as I cry now. My husband came and he loves her too and he loved on her, too.*

*Then we went inside and with both of us beside her soothingly stroking and saying, "God bless you. God bless you. God bless you,"*

*the shot was given. She died. I don't want to say, "She went to sleep." No, Daisy died. I'm so very sad. I cry once more as I write to you.*

*The stars are still shining. The air is still pungently fertile with spring. From the vet's, my husband I were to go to one of our grandson's pre-birthday dinners at his house with three of his great-grandparents and parents. On the way, I took a detour and I stopped at a store where I'd seen two eleven-dollar Russian icons - one of Mary and the Babe and the other of Jesus. They are probably very tacky. They are placed on the gearshift of my car and they will join the company of other memorabilia that my children won't want when I'm dead and gone. Has there ever been a tacky religious artifact estate sale? This might be the first.*

*Anyway, all I know is that these things helped. I don't know why animals have to suffer, why people have to suffer. There is so much I don't know, don't understand, and somehow looking at tacky icons help. All is well. I don't care what the situation, what the circumstance, all is well. Because our Lord God, all is well.*

*We went to the dinner party. The company was superb, the dinner superb. We toasted our grandson. We toasted his parents and we toasted Daisy, our dog.*

*It has been another up, down, all-around kind of a day, as I said. I gaze into the northwestern sky. There is a comet out there that is said to be ten times bigger than Haley's. In town, the lights are too bright to see it. Nevertheless, that comet is out there. To me,*

*that is just as much a fact as my Father God, who is working His purpose out, always. We might not see it, or perceive it - but He is.*

*Daisy was a four-legged love package. Our Father God's whole nature is Love, so somehow - again, I don't understand it, but believe it - all is connected when it comes to Love. Daisy, thank you for the hours of love and devotion and companionship. I thank the Lord for you.*

*There is, Precious Pilgrim, a comet out there in that dark sky right this moment. There is a God who is nearer than my breath. He is Love. Daisy, the dog, was a lover. Somehow, there is a connection. I don't understand it. I don't need to. I do need to say, "Thank You, Lord, for my grandson, my husband, children, grandchildren, grandparents, parents, people, friends, sheep, lambs, horses, dogs, and especially tonight, one precious dog called Daisy."*

*Thank you, Lord, for the richness of life and the awesome varied expressions of Your Love.*

*Precious Pilgrim, peace. Have you also experienced such an animal lover?*

*I am your sister in Christ,*

*Lucy*