

*Come Holy Spirit  
Use me to Your glory*

*Precious Pilgrim,*

*Our youngest son, Jud, just bought a Stetson cowboy hat and it tickles my heart. Why? Because of the memories that it evokes. It reminds me of when he was twelve years old, which was the last year of his mother-centered babyhood. I'm sure that he sees his thirteenth year as a more memorable milestone (when full-blown puberty set in), but for me, twelve was the memorable mark. It was a glorious boy-man age, for there were still traces of the innocent child left. I'd still get an embarrassed or unexpected kiss or hug or giggle or cry. Even though I could see the man emerging, the baby boy was still present for a few moments, brief memorable moments.*

*And this new Stetson hat reminds me of such a time - Europe 1983 - the family trip. One month - eight countries - six of us traveling in a five-passenger car. We made the movie, *European Vacation*, seem meek and mild by comparison. Jud's designated seat in the car was the console. There he sat looking more like an elf than the littlest brother, for you see, he had purchased, with his own money, one of those green felt Alpine hats. He wore it morning, noon and night. And all of us laughed at him and did a fair bit of teasing, but in no way did that affect the importance of the hat. It became fancier and fancier as the trip progressed, for with each new location,*

*he added a city pin. And thus it became heavier and heavier with hat pins and more and more hilarious.*

*And now, here sitting on the sofa in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, is the big strapping young man with the Stetson and it tickles my heart. He's eating cereal, dressed in long underwear and the hat - a perfect morning outfit! Yes - the little boy lives once more! Don't tell him!*

*He's not the only adorable male I've seen on this spur-of-the-moment four-day skiing trip. Yesterday I went to St. Paul's Episcopal Church. It was small and intimate and alive and a real treat to attend. The parishioners wear pants and parkas. The choir practices fifteen minutes before the service starts and anyone can join. The visitors receive a loaf of bread like the Communion loaf and a warm welcome. Children seemed to come and go all during the service and when a baby started crying during the sermon, the priest just mentioned the cute culprit's name, which instantly quieted him down. Then, when it came time for the lay reader to make announcements, the minister sat on the front pew and all of the children filed in for Communion and joined him on the bench. One angelic-looking young man, I'd guess about nine years old, boldly plopped himself down on the minister's lap. He was greeted with an affectionate hug. The boy then proudly turned to the little boy next to him and stuck out his tongue. I almost burst out laughing. It was another heart-tickle.*

*And then I started thinking about lap sitting. I love the scripture when Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me for such is the kingdom of God." This beautifully intimate word picture has been portrayed with great tenderness over the years, and justly so. You can just shut your eyes and envision our Savior encircled by children - beautiful, orderly, angelic children. Right? Wrong! I bet they were more like the little boy with the tongue sticking out, possibly pushing and shoving and embarrassing their parents to death. I mean, enthusiasm reigned. "Me first!" "Me first!" "Jesus, I love you!"*

*"But your hair's not combed!" "Your hands are dirty!" "You don't have on your Sunday best!" "You haven't confessed your sins!" "You're not perfect!" - might have been their parents' paralyzing responses.*

*But the children - onward and upward - into their Jesus' lap. And I bet He reached down and picked up each and every one of them, just as they were, and gave each and every one of them what they desired - an affectionate hug and a tender touch. And what about the little boy who stuck out his tongue? I bet Jesus would have burst out laughing and given him a special squeeze. Of course, He'd admonish him for the unkind act to his peer, but He would appreciate the unadulterated pleasure that the young boy was showing. "See, I'm here sitting in the lap of Someone who loves me - even if I stick out my*

*tongue!" I mean, that's assurance, blessed assurance! Don't you think?*

*The song which keeps playing in my brain over and over again is "The Little Drummer Boy." It started a few weeks ago when I bought Mary Barwick, my friend's first granddaughter, Hannah, a "Little Drummer boy" cross-stitched picture. It's pink and precious (both Hannah and the picture). But what I liked most about the representation was not just the picture, but more importantly the "Pah Rum Pah Pah Pum," outlining the whole scene. The song says, "I played my best for Him." It doesn't say how melodic that was or whether the grown-ups would have said, "Cut that noise out!" It just says, "I played my best for Him.." Isn't that grand? What a gift for the Christ!*

*I wish that there was a mall Santa year round who would just daily sit and give each visiting child a genuine hug - not asking about his or her behavior or his or her wants, but instead, all each child would receive was a genuine hug.*

*I wish the children could bring drums and ballet slippers and tricycles and Big Wheels and roller skates and baseballs and softballs and Alpine hats - I mean, the ultimate show and tell possibility. Each would "play my best for Him" and each would receive a genuine hug and each would understand a little bit better about whose birthday Christmas really is. Or maybe they already know. Maybe they remember the hug - His hug. Maybe we grown-ups have made the "Pah Rum Pah Pah Pums" of Christmas out of tune.*

*Maybe there needs to be an "Adults Only" line for the hugging Santa. Maybe we're the ones who need to come with enthusiasm to the Christ - with sticky hands and smudged noses and sins and Stetson hats - possibly pushing and shoving, but enthusiastically loving. Maybe we need the hugs and the heart-tickles.*

*May His Peace*

*Pah Rum Pah Pah Pum*

*May His Joy*

*Pah Rum Pah Pah Pum*

*May His Love*

*Pah Rum Pah Pah Pum*

*Tickle your heart today.*

*Your sister in Christ,*

*Lucy*