

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

I'm still crying!

Thank you, Lord.

I've been on a crying binge since yesterday afternoon and it feels so good! My husband wisely counseled me to go say "Good-bye" to my grandma. So I got in my car at 4:30 PM and I drove to Birmingham - and that's when it started - the gusher of tears - all the way home.

I use the word "home" because it's like taking a trip back in time to my beginning home - for the memories just poured in. Grandma represents to me most of my childhood and many of my aspirations and dreams. I was raised in a unique situation; at least it's becoming both unique and rare these days, for we had an old-fashioned extended family. Grandma lived with us, or rather we lived with Grandma.

You see, my grandfather died the year I was born. It was decided when I was five that we would move in with my grandmother so that she wouldn't have to move or live alone. And I'm so glad we did. It was a grand, wonderful old Colonial house with banisters that you could slide down and hidden closets that you could play in, but best of all, was the blue room where Grandma lived.

Although the door was often shut, it was never locked, and all I had to do was knock and it was opened. And what a

haven it was! I was always met with a warm greeting. I knew I was loved and welcomed. She taught me to sew. I was in charge of wrapping her Christmas presents. She'd often share an apple with me. She'd take me on Sundays to St. Martins-in-the-Pines to serve tea to the older people.

But best of all would be the talks. There was an overstuffed chintz chair that I was allowed to sit in, preferably correctly, but often I'd sit in it with my legs hung over the arm and there we'd talk about anything. I mean, anything. She was unshockable, unprejudiced and a grand listener. She smiled and laughed and advised me all the way through my childhood years, my high school years, and my college years.

Many of our life choices have paralleled. We're both Lucys and Grandma is my step-grandmother. She married my grandfather, who was a widower with three children. I married my husband, who was a widower with three children. She married at her parents' home in their garden. I married at my parent's home in the garden. She moved from Montgomery to Birmingham and I moved from Birmingham to Montgomery. Grandma is now 94 and is failing fast. Mentally, she is sharp as a tack, but recently she has not been able to keep any food down. The doctor says there's really nothing that he can do, for her esophagus has worn out. So, I went to tell her good-bye - until I join her on the other side. Oh, and I thank the Dear Lord that He gave me this privilege, for I've never had this luxury before. The only other close

deaths that I have experienced were sudden deaths and there was no good-bye time.

I spent about an hour with Grandma. When I walked into her room she said twice, "You came just in time," not morbidly, or sadly, just stating a fact. One reason Grandma has always been so delightful and entertaining is that she lives in the present and always has. We didn't talk about our old glorious memories, for we were still making new ones.

She wanted to know about what was going on now with our family - what the latest trend was in Montgomery and how our latest trip was. She apologized for not being very "entertaining." Can you imagine? She was fighting back nausea with every breath.

I was the one that wasn't very entertaining, but that was fine. I was saying "good-bye." What do you do? Well, I just sat next to her bed and put my hand on her tiny shoulder and silently prayed, giving thanks to our Almighty God for this saint in my life and to please not let her suffer much longer. And to take her into His Almighty arms quickly. I read Psalms to her. She shut her eyes and listened and wiped away a tear.

When it was time to leave, I gave her a kiss and told her, "I love you." She said, "I believe you do." And I said, "Grandma, you have influenced me more than anyone else in my life!" Then I left, got back in my car, put the music back on and continued with praying, praising and tears, all the way to my mama's home.

Mama wasn't there and when I called my husband, neither was he. I was disappointed because I wanted to share some of the "good-bye" with them, but then I realized that it was to be between me and Grandma and that was the way it should be until now when I've had a time of reflection.

When I went to bed last night, I found a note from Mama and a present. I opened it and much to my delight, she had given me a crèche scene for the lake. I immediately set it up on the table directly across from the bed. I took the little lamp from the bathroom to illuminate the scene - Mary, Joseph adoring the Baby. It was beautiful and was the last light I turned off before going to sleep.

And this morning it was the first light on. The figures remind me of how good we are at saying hello. They represent the Holy Mother and Father greeting their Holy Child. We know how that's done. We've all oohed and aaahed over meeting and greeting new babies. We've all oohed and aaahed over meeting and greeting new and old friends. I think we've got it down pat how to say hello - it's the good-byes where we have problems. At least, that's how it's been for me, for my world has gone so fast that I blast through life without closing doors gently behind. High school - slam! Brother died - slam! College - slam! Father died - slam! Moved from Birmingham - slam! Moved from Montgomery - slam! Moved from Miami - slam! Moved from Lakeland - slam! Grandparents died - slam! Moved from Montgomery - slam!

Moved from Wilmington - slam! I know with each transition I didn't exit "grace-fully," and behind each slammed door are a lot of good-byes that I didn't allow to happen and I believe you can't let go if you don't say good-bye.

But ah, the difference I feel about Grandma. There was no door slamming done yesterday. We enjoyed each other immensely and shared our love and shared our good-byes and the door was gently closed. And just like the door to her blue room growing up, it wasn't locked. I can open the door at any time and visit and remember with great joy until we are together again.

I again want to thank my heavenly Father for allowing me this "grace-full" good-bye time with Grandma.

And what about those past door-slamming episodes? Well, I plan to go back in my memory and ask the Lord in prayer to help me to open some of those doors and to ask the Lord to help me shut them a little more gently. Jesus said, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, and he who seeks, finds, and to him who knocks, it shall be opened." Matthew 7:7-8. That sounds like He is a wonderful doorman, doesn't it?

And what if Grandma lives to the ripe old age of 100? Well, I'm so glad that we've said our good-byes so that from now on we'll just look on our time together as gift time with great joy.

My prayer for her is an age old one used by Israel (Genesis 46:30) and Simeon (Luke 2:29) "Lord, now lettest thou servant depart in peace," but if not now, we'll enjoy our gift time until the door gently closes - only to be opened again - by our Lord.

I am your sister in Christ,

Lucy

P.S. Might you also be needing to go back and reopen and reclose some doors in your life more properly? Ask and the Lord will help.