

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

Today are you a participator or a possum player? In other words, today are you a do-er or a be-er?

I must confess that all week long I've been the latter instead of the former and I continue to be. Right now I'm sitting on the beach in a wonderfully protected, tented blue cabana. It's like a double bed with a half tester on the top. I can expose myself to the elements as much or as little as I want. I'm protected, which is preferable when you're just be-ing, for you're more vulnerable in this state. You tend to absorb your surroundings as opposed to react to them. And right now, that's all I want to do, for I've got to sit on the sidelines of life for a little while until I finish processing the deaths of Charlie and Tim. They were two children that lived at Father Purcell's Exceptional Center. Both had lived there almost all of their twelve years of life and both had died there within the past week. I'd known them only in the capacity of being their weekly volunteer music lady. In all the years, I'd never really gotten Charlie to respond in any noticeable manner. His blue, blue eyes seemed already focused on another world. Tim, however, I knew loved earthly music, especially classical.

The rest of our party right now of eight is learning to scuba in the ocean. For the last hour they've been swimming and kicking and carrying on while I've been observing like a

hermit crab under my blue tent. Maybe I've really been more like a soft-shell crab, for I seem to have shed my protective covering. My hard shell has had to come off, for I've experienced a new pivotal point in my life and with pivotal points you must shed your old-shelled self so you can grow. And a growth opportunity is what Charlie and Tim gave me. During their lives I gave them volunteer hours, but at their death, they gave me the pivotal point of rock solid blessed assurance. At this moment:

I must stop the world and say, "Thank you."

I must pause for a brief intermission and say, "Thank you."

I must play taps in my mind for these two precious children of God, who yelled out to me at death, "Peace."

Thank you, boys.

It's now dusk and another day. I'm looking out of our bedroom window. There seems to have descended on this entire world a translucent veil, which gives everything a gossamer glow. Thank goodness for this softening of the extremes, for the extremes of wind and sun and heat can be oppressive.

Barbara, my friend and fellow mom on this trip, shared with me her insight that we are more lovers of the lake than of the beach because we enjoy moderation more than extreme. Give me a gentle breeze over a pounding wind any day. Give me sunscreen number four and a humid eighty degrees over sunblock number fifteen and a blistering ninety degrees any day.

The relief of the haze is welcomed. It seems to act as a transitional curtain between the departing day and the arriving night. I can no longer see the pounding sun, for it has set. The ocean seems to have settled down a bit, along with the wind. Everything feels more moderate and somehow, more balanced. Thank you, Lord.

The gentler breeze reminds me of the blowing fan at Father Purcell's and I must go back.... Last Friday I arrived at our usual time, 9:30, and the head nurse said that Charlie had died 30 minutes earlier and would I like to see the body? I thought how heartless the word "body" was, but then later I realized how appropriate. I had never seen new death; I'd only seen processed death. "Lucy -- gross!" Well, it is gross! Death with makeup is not a pretty picture, but death with white linen sheets and little stuffed animals on the bed and a cloth rolled up under the chin to keep the mouth closed was right - was how it had been handled for ages and correctly so. It was a holy death.

I was left alone in the room. You could feel a calm serenity and peace clinging to the air. A fan was gently blowing like a continual breath. And then, four days later, another death. I visited once more, out of respect and homage. Neither visit felt like a good-bye, but rather a release.

I look with joyful anticipation at seeing these two precious boys again on the other side. I might not recognize them at first, for they and I will be "whole" as never before, but then

there will come grand smiles of recognition. I'll finally learn what Charlie's blue, blue eyes were looking at for all these past years and Tim will tell me which melody he really liked best. They'll get to say thank you for the music time, but best of all, and most importantly, I'll get to say thank you for their blessed assurance given.

Because of their shared departures - I know that I know that I know - even deeper. Of course, I've known for as long as I can remember that Jesus is my Lord and my Rock and my Savior in whom I put my trust. I've known and I know, but as I said, the knowledge is now deeper.

Just as this gossamer glow of dusk separates the day from the night, I saw in Charlie's and Tim's departures their days turned into a dawning, the ultimate dawning. I could have sworn that the angels were still hovering close, but all I could see or feel or hear was a little fan blowing its gentle breeze, reminding me of the "Ultimate Breath," my Lord God's.

It's been a very interesting week for I've been more on the sidelines and I think that's OK. In fact, possibly better. I've been processing instead of participating. I've been processing the boys' deaths and, I believe, processing to a deeper degree our Lord Jesus' death.

This week I visited the Holy Cross Church in St. Croix in the Virgin Islands. I was the only non-native. During the service the priest walked to the rear of the church where I was seated and handed me his prayer book. I felt it was a silent

declaration of, "Welcome, sister sojourner!" I was no longer a stranger.

In his sermon he personalized Christ's pain, shame, loss, scourging, suffering, betrayal, death. I was surrounded by men, women and children whose ancestors, only a little over a century ago had been slaves in the fields outside this church's walls; the same church walls had been devastated by a hurricane just a few years earlier. They were Resurrection People. The walls had been rebuilt. Their ancestors' shackles had been broken. "Holy Cross" was a good name, for only through the cross can we have redemption; only through the cross can we be truly free; only through the cross can devastation be turned into a declaration of faith.

At Holy Cross they made this pilgrim feel no longer a stranger, but a sister sojourner and I thank them for this welcome. It profoundly reminds me of Christ's resurrection and ones to come - Tim's - Charlie's - yours - mine.

"Blessed Assurance." Again, thank you, boys. At your departures you reminded me of our Ultimate Dawning.

*Because of Jesus, I am your sister sojourner,
Lucy*

P.S. I'd like to end by reading Luke 8:50, 52, 54-55. Jesus said to Jairus, a father of a twelve-year-old child who had died, "Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole." And then He said, "Weep not, she is not dead, but sleepeth." And

then He said, "Maid, arise." And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway...." Amen and amen.