

*Come Holy Spirit  
Use me to Your glory*

*Precious Pilgrim,*

*“Remember the Alamo!” Your letter today is about fortresses. I’ve visited a few in my day - big ones, little ones - fancy and plain. Castles, towers, forts - using stone, bricks, steel, wood or earth to keep the good guys safe and the bad guys out - to keep the good guys safe and the destructive elements out - but often, to no avail. It seems like every tour I’ve been on which included visiting such structures, the guide, when giving the history of the place, would tell when the building was completed and when it was conquered by man or destroyed by natural disaster. “Remember the Alamo!”*

*Just a little over a week ago I was at the lake with my family. One of our recently adopted new traditions is to gather at the lake on “Boxing Day,” which is the day after Christmas. Part of this, now new tradition is having soup and sandwiches and a craft project provided by “Goo-goo,” that’s me. We’ve decorated trees for the birds with peanut butter, seeds, and fruit. (Now, that was really gooey!) And we’ve made wonderful candy houses.*

*This year we had at our home my husband’s oldest son and his family and my husband’s brother for Christmas Eve. On Christmas Day we drove 1-1/2 hours to have lunch with my husband’s daughter and her family and his younger son and*

*his family, plus we squeezed in a sweet visit to my mother. Then we drove 1-1/2 hours to the lake.*

*The days prior, I'd shopped till I'd dropped; wrapped, tagged, ribboned, bowed; cooked, cleaned, polished and scrubbed. Anyway, you get the picture, Pilgrim; it was just your typical wonderful whirlwind of a joyous season. Christmas night, as my husband and I settled down, just the two of us, before a roaring fire, I must admit I was pretty proud of myself. All projects and plans and presents were complete. All that was left was a wonderful relaxed casual Boxing Day.*

*I had all of my eight grandchildren. What a gift! What a joy! It was such a blessing! There was, however, one glitch. My seven-year-old redheaded namesake, Lucy, came up to me with her big brown eyes and said, "Goo-goo, are we going to make the candy houses this year?"*

*Oh! Tragedy of tragedy - horrors of horrors! I'd forgotten all about my busyness - the craft project! I had to confess my failure. And with obviously deep disappointment, but forgiveness in her heart, little Lucy said, "That's OK." Gulp! I felt awful. She ran outside. "Remember the Alamo!"*

*A little later on during the day, I was asked by one of the grans if they could build a fort. I was thrilled that I could say "yes" for the day before, I'd had to say "no" to the request of being allowed to have the found treasure of a dead, needle-less Christmas tree pulled up onto the porch.*

*It was a mild day and perfect for such an activity of fort building. I knew. I'd done the very same thing at about the very same location at about the very same age. Sweet memories. I smiled and went on with my own inside activities. A little later during the day, I was asked by Frances, age 10, if we had any tape to hold up signs. We did.*

*Finally, it dawned on me, I needed to go check the fortress building out. That was the least I could do, seeing that I hadn't provided the craft entertainment and the children had had to be creative and entertain themselves.*

*Yea! Thank the dear Lord I did and thank the dear Lord, I hadn't - that is I did go check on them and I hadn't done the planned activity. What they had created was great! You had to adjust your eyes to the imagination of the creators, but once they enthusiastically started pointing out the entrance and reading their signs, which hung from the trees, it became crystal clear. The name of this fort was "Fort Frances, Hall, Lucy and Jud." The only rule they stipulated was "NO 13-YEAR OLDS ALLOWED." That regulation was geared to our eldest gran who had recently become a teenager. Why, this year she had actually chosen to eat with the grown-ups and eat grown-up food. Yuck! This group couldn't believe her transformation into a young lady; as a matter of fact, neither can I.*

*They then proudly showed me the treasured needle-less Christmas tree. Well, "Pleased as punch" with their production, I went back inside. No more need for me to come up with*

*creative craft ideas. In fact, next year, I might ask if I can join in on their fun. But "Remember the Alamo."*

*Simultaneously to the children's positive building was the slow awareness of the Tsunami that had taken place in Asia, December 26, 2004. It was my English stepson who brought this horrendous disaster to our attention, for he had visited the affected area.*

*As I write to you, Pilgrim, it's now been over a week since the actual event. My mind still cannot wrap itself around the reality - over 120,000 people thus have died. The heartbreaking stories. Towns totally washed away - forlorn family members looking for their loved ones. And the children, oh, the children, so many dead and those that did survive, many orphaned.*

*Frozen in my psyche are some of the poignant pictures - a mother holding her dead infant - a child with hauntingly hollow lightless eyes. At a tender age, he had seen and experienced too much horror. I want to remember, never forget. Not to be morbid, but rather to be more aware of the pain and suffering that is constantly going on in this world.*

*I believe with every fiber of my being - that our Lord Jesus Christ is aware and does care and does grieve. John 11:35 says, "Jesus wept." I believe Jesus weeps. And that very same Apostle John, the beloved one, the one that we learn in John 21:20 leaned on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper wrote, "God is love." (That's 1 John 4:8.)*

*My friend Elizabeth pointed out to me just this week that she believed John, with his lean on the Lord, could actually hear the heartbeat of Jesus and that such intimacy is available to each one of us, Pilgrim. Heartbeat of Jesus. And I believe what he heard was "God is love! God is love! God is Love."*

*"Remember the Alamo!" Why do I keep saying that? Well, I guess I want to declare that I believe there is no man-made structure, no castle, tower, fortress or fort that can protect us ultimately from harm's way - only our living Lord Jesus can.*

*That is what I want to sit down and say to my grans the next time I see them. That yes - their fortress is great - but only our Lord God is the true Fortress. Yes, and even more so on disaster days like December 26, 2004.*

*Listen, Pilgrim, to part of King David's Song of Deliverance found in 2 Samuel 22:2-5a. It would be a good song for us to sing this day.*

*"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;  
The God of my rock; in him will I trust. He is my shield, and  
the horn of my salvation; my high tower, and my refuge, my  
savior; thou savest me from violence.*

*I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so  
shall I be saved from my enemies.*

*When the waves of death compassed me."*

*Oh, Pilgrim ~ listen ~ listen ~ may we hear the heartbeat  
of Jesus today.*

*There will always be the mystery of disaster with us in this broken world, but the Good News is that at the very same time we have a living Lord Jesus - a weeping Living Lord Jesus - a weeping "Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world" Living Lord Jesus, whose heartbeat is ever saying:*

*"I LOVE YOU*

*I LOVE YOU*

*I LOVE YOU"*

*May we listen more intently today.*

*I am your sister in Christ,*

*Lucy*