

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

For the past two weeks, scenes from the musical, "The Sound of Music" and the book, Heidi, have been floating through my mind. The reason being is possibly because my husband and I have been hiking in the Swiss Alps.

There have been fields where Julie Andrews could have been twirling and singing, "The hills are alive with the sound of music." There have been goats which Heidi's friend Peter could have been herding. There have been little mountain cabins in which Heidi herself could have been living.

It has been an extraordinary gift of a trip, which has helped mark the retirement of my husband from his practice as a physician. In preparation for this transition, we've had numerous conversations on how he'd like to mark this momentous occasion - 42 years of doctoring and never missing a scheduled day is a huge accomplishment! Wouldn't you say?

I've suggested a reception with patients and staff and colleagues and friends invited. It was met with a resounding "No!"

"How about a dinner at home with close friends?" "No!"

"How about?"

Thank the dear Lord, I gave up and quit with my suggestions and my darlin' did just what he wanted, which was absolutely perfect and true to who he is. He let his patients

know months in advance so that he could see all that needed to be seen. He then scheduled an extra five minutes or so, for each appointment - adjusting the amount as needed. He'd bring each lady into his office after her examination, as he always had done, and then allowed for a proper goodbye farewell talk.

On his return home from work, I'd receive reports of some tears and some hugs and some laughter - never any specific names or details, for that's not my darlin's ways. Just a quiet, humble report. Many of the patients, as adults, had never seen another doctor. There were many a retellings of birthings and many updates given about some of those 14,000 babies he'd helped bring into the world.

The ladies talked and my darlin' listened - which he has done and which he does do - oh so very well!

My mind skips now for a moment to Mother Mary, Jesus' mama. I hope it will skip back presently to this "farewell" theme - but I can't help but pause and mentally revisit the old tradition that has been passed down for centuries, rather millenniums. (Although not recorded in the Bible, I do hope it is true.) Some believe that it's just possible that St. Luke, the gospel writing physician, might have received some of his account from interviewing Jesus' mother.

No! I'm not comparing my darlin' to the apostle. Heaven forbid! Goodness, if he wouldn't allow a reception in his honor, I guarantee such a comparison would really make him

run! Besides, each one of us is uniquely made. It's just that I have ladies and their physicians on my mind right now. And it would have been a tender gift of a time for Mother Mary if she could have talked one on one to Dr. Luke about her Beloved Son. Don't you think, Pilgrim?

Anyway, just a thought. I apologize how my mind is jumping. I think it's jetlagging already! Right now, as I'm writing to you, we're flying homeward bound. "Homeward bound?" Why, I could easily jump onto that theme, but no, I'll try to refrain myself and circle back to your letter's original theme - "Farewells." Well, sort of.

Back to "The Sound of Music:" Is there any musical movie farewell scene better than this one? Do you remember, Pilgrim? Each one of those eight adorable Von Trapp children was strategically standing on a step of that grand hall stairway. He or she would sing a solo, which seemed to perfectly capture the child's personality and then, on completion, ascend the stairs. Solo - then soaring up the stairs - what a sight to see - and hear!

Below, the roomful of listening adults became so enthralled and captivated that the song ends with them in unison singing "good night" back to the children. Sounds corny, but somehow it works!

"So long, farewell." Farewell. Isn't that a wonderful word? I just looked it up in the dictionary. (Yes, I must admit, I travel with my Webster's.) A longer version could be "Fare ye

well” or “Fare you well.” That sounds like a blessing or a benediction. Doesn’t it, Pilgrim? That little two syllable word can explode into a huge blanket of blessings!

“Blanket of blessings” -- bleep! -- my mind jumps yet again to the totally unexpected “fare-ye-well” gift received just yesterday. Our tour group was gathered a final time at the train station in order to catch the train from Kanderstad to Zurich, where we’d disperse to our various destinations. There were fourteen of us with numerous backpacks, duffle bags, suitcases, and sacks. With all this stuff, it was quite obvious that we were leaving as opposed to arriving.

As we stood by the tracks waiting for that wonderfully precision timed Swiss train to arrive, I noticed a lady who was not with our group. Even so, she seemed to be mingling with each one of our party and handing out something. It was interesting to observe the various reactions - some rejected and some accepted her offering.

I initially surmised that she was a beggar. Then, I thought, maybe she was just a little mentally unstable. Nowadays, one doesn’t talk to strangers or accept unsolicited gifts. Right? (Lord, forgive this wary world we’ve created.)

Anyway, I decided whatever the situation, I would take the gift and if need be, suffer the consequences later. She approached. She offered. I accepted. And I’m so glad I did! She handed me an envelope, then moved on to another. I looked inside and found a lovely picture of the mountains, a

copy of a beautiful prayer, and a copy of Philippians 2:14,15 which said: "Do all things without complaining or questioning so that you will be irreproachable and pure."

After reading, I walked over to the lady, who was no longer a stranger, but a fellow sister in Christ, and said, "Thank you," and showed her my necklace with a cross, so she'd realize our kinship too. She smiled and gave me yet another beautiful card.

Pilgrim, wasn't that a most wonderful goodbye, fare-ye-well, blanket of a blessing to have received?

May I conclude your today's letter with a smile, having once more gazed upon this unexpected gift, and with these words also of St. Paul's, which are found in II Corinthians 13:11-14.

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints salute you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."

Now that is another grand and glorious "Fare-ye-well" goodbye send-off blessing. Wouldn't you say, Pilgrim?

Our plane is about to land, so I'd better quit your letter. I also want to have time to nudge my darlin' who's sitting right next to me. I know he'll listen, for he's so good at that - but as

to doing what I suggest - thank goodness, that's not necessarily the case.

"Oh honey, what do you think about me cross stitching the word "Farewell and II Corinthians 13:11-14? Might that be a good Christmas present for your past patients?"

"Lucy!"

God is so good, Pilgrim! I thank Him for His Holy Word. I thank Him for His Son. I thank Him for His Holy Spirit - the Healer, with a capital H and for this wise, listening, loving husband of mine - Dr. Paul Pressley McCain, M.D., otherwise known by the grans as "Docs."

God speed and fare ye well, Pilgrim.

I am your sister in Christ,

Lucy

God bless.