

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

It was at the end of my late husband's funeral - a raw, but victorious moment in time. I was walking hand in hand with my beautiful 30-year-old English stepdaughter. We were following her 28-year-old brother who was carrying his father's ashes. We were all following the cross.

As we recessed down the seemingly endless isle at the Chapel of the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, my eyes caught sight of one of my children's uncles. His unexpected presence touched my heart.

The children and I continued to walk as one lone bagpipe piped "Amazing Grace." As I said, it was a raw, but victorious moment. There was victory in Jesus for Duncan John MacLeod, for you see, my late husband was, is and will be, for all eternity, a Christian.

So much of that service that day, the week before and the weeks that followed are a blur. Shock is a wonderful tool. It's like a frozen cocoon which is spun around your emotions, surrounding, protecting you so that you can initially continue to function. And then, with time, a melting begins and the protective covering starts unwinding and by God's grace, healing begins.

The image that just popped into my brain is one of a surprise ball. As a child, my Easter basket usually included a

surprise ball which was a ball made from strips of crepe paper. As you unwound it, there would be tiny little surprise presents hidden in the paper. Strange, such a positive memory representing such a painful process called grieving. It is hard work with strong labor pains like for a birthing, except you can't time the contractions. You never know when those waves of grief will hit you.

First, they are strong like with a gale force wind that will knock you off your feet - bringing you to your knees. Heart cries of "Help" go out to the Lord. By His grace, you're able to stand once more and then again, usually when you least expect it, you get blindsided once more.

With time, the waves of grief do seem to settle down. There is always a void, that hole in your heart where you will always be missing that loved one, but with time, light seems to shine in the hole - love - eternal love light seems to take up residence.

Maybe that's why the image of the surprise ball came to mind. Now, after 2-1/2 years, I'm left with that hole in my heart, which, as I said, will always be there on this side of eternity. But there is light and wonderful memories. Occasionally they float into my mind. Those are the wonderful gifts like from a crepe paper surprise ball.

One of the frozen moments that still stick in my mind from Duncan's funeral was, as I said previously, seeing one of my children's uncles, one of the brothers of my ex-husband. His other three siblings were there. I'd already seen and loved on

them and them on me. But this brother, who I'd known the longest, for we were closest in age - his presence was a gift surprise and his unexpected presence did touch my heart deeply.

I hate the term ex - ex-brother-in-law; ex-sister-in-law; ex-mother-in-law, ex-father-in-law. In my case, how can you spend 29 years connected as a family and then, with one decree from a judge - relationships are changed. The fallout is incredible. The repercussions -- staggering. In my ignorance, I hadn't expected or anticipated such an earthquake - a schism - multiple heart rips. Even under the best of circumstances, a divorce is messy. Unexpected shock waves occur. Some people just don't know what to do with you. Some people treat you as if you have a social disease and might be contagious.

As a whole, I was so blessed to have the loving support of my church family, family and close friends - but still it is tough.

And here was this uncle, one who had gotten caught in the fallout. Our worlds had gone down totally different paths - he, mainly living in Florida - I, with time, having married Duncan - and now, this uncle was at Duncan's funeral. As I said, it touched my heart.

And then, just two days ago - once again we've both found ourselves attending another funeral. This time it was the funeral for a young 20-year-old cousin of his - a real

tragedy. On seeing him, it brought back the strong memory of Duncan's funeral and his attending. As we were leaving the service, I went up to him and told him, "Thank you. Thank you for attending Duncan's service. I never got to tell you that and it meant so much." Surprisingly, my eyes began to water and I believe his did too.

He then said, "I miss you."

I then said, "I miss you too."

That was it. He went his way. I went mine. I don't know when we'll see each other again. But those wonderful words of truth were spoken. "I miss you." "I miss you too."

Oh, Pilgrim, how grand and glorious they were to say and to hear. I wish those tolling bells would have stopped briefly and changed their melody for a joyful one. I know that wouldn't have been appropriate for those who were freshly caught in the strong throes of grief and mourning. It's just that getting to hear face to face, "I miss you" - and getting to say face to face, "I miss you too" - was such a surprise gift.

Oh, and if I had my way, I'd ask the Lord if He didn't mind, could we just have all those loved ones - family, friends, whose worlds are now far away from mine, either on this side or the next - to line up for a hug and an "I love you" and an "I miss you" do-si-do square dance. Wouldn't that be fun? Could it get any better, Pilgrim? Would you like to participate in such a line dance, too? I believe, by God's grace, some day we will.

Listen to these words found in Colossians 1:17-20. "He (our Lord Jesus) is before all things and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead so that in everything He might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross."

"Reconcile to Himself all things" -- Yes! - That sounds like an all-inclusive dance, doesn't it? And each one of us has already received our invitation to attend because of our belief in our Lord and Savior Jesus. We are all invited. Now, Pilgrim, go do-si-do your Partner - may it be the Lord today.

*I am your sister in Christ,
Lucy*

P.S. Pilgrim, this was a surprisingly hard letter to write and it might have been a little r confusing. I pray not. Deaths - divorces are heavy-duty stuff.

Now, once more, by God's abundant grace, I am happily married, as you've learned in some of your most recent letters. You see, you are hearing about 15 years of my life compressed into a year's worth of letters. Goodness, and has there ever been some strong living during this season. I bet that's also true for you.

It is my prayer that through it all, our Lord's Name is being lifted up and He is being glorified and you are receiving a little encouragement for your journey towards Home - "Go, Pilgrim, Go! Go in the love of Christ - Peace and all Love in Him!"

And once more - let's hear these words of truth in Colossians 1:17-20: "He (our Lord Jesus) is before all things and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the first born from among the dead so that in everything He might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross."

Peace, Pilgrim. God bless.