

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

Do you know what a wonderfully positive word your club's name is? Newcomers! You could have been called "The Transplants" or "The Outsiders" or "The Foreigners" or "The Aliens," for all those names would have been appropriate at some point. I know. I've been there. Done that over and over and over again. Our family moved almost every three years for the first half of our marriage. Montgomery to Miami to Lakeland, Florida, back to Montgomery, then to Wilmington, Delaware, and then back to Montgomery.

My husband would have come home, wherever "home" might be at the point at that time, and say, "We have the opportunity for another growing experience - start packing." "But, but..." It might not have been that abrupt, but often, that was how it felt. "But...but honey, we've just begun to get situated. The children have just settled into their new routines. Their schools. Their friends. Their outside activities. Everything is starting to have a wonderful rhythm of normalcy. I've found a patient pediatrician, a divine dentist, and a gentle gynecologist. I've got an extraordinary baby-sitting list that's worth its weight in gold. There's church, a Bible study. I've actually made a friend or two between carpooling. You know it takes me at least two years to start growing roots, and they have begun. Why, I know how to drive downtown all by

myself without getting lost. I've learned how to throw coffee on the windshield to get the ice off in the morning. I've learned how to avoid the potholes and drive in the snow and, and... why, why...there are still plenty of opportunities for growth right here."

"Sorry. I start next week at the new location. I need for you and the children to stay until the house sells and the school year ends. Then, we'll buy a new house, pack, move, unpack. Meanwhile, I'll be home on the weekends, when possible, and phone home nightly. Honey, you can do it. Bye."

"But, but..."

I know I'm exaggerating just a little and am starting to enjoy reliving this melodrama. It's been some time since I've revisited this "newcomers" world. I'd forgotten how hard it can be, especially on women. Even in this liberated world of today in which a move might not be just one professional job, but two. But to get reestablished, we ladies still are the ones primarily in charge of the relocating and rebuilding of the nest. It is primarily our job to make the new world feel safe and friendly and protective for our families. Meals made, tears wiped, stiff upper lip and all that stuff.

My mind jumps back to a scene that happened about 25 years ago. I had a car accident in Miami where we were living and three of our four children were passengers. The car was totaled, but thank the dear Lord no one was seriously injured. I can still envision the three children, ages 7, 5 and 3 looking

up at me with fawn-like frightened eyes and me doing my best to keep calm. How I reacted seemed to be directly related to how they responded. This is a fine-tuned image for me of what a move is like. We are the glue that holds that new, scary world together. How we react, how we respond, and how we adapt to the unknown colors their environment for our family. The responsibility is hard. It is stressful.

Woe, am I beginning to feel re-burdened. And then, if all that's not enough to take the air out of your balloon, the bounce out of your walk, the twinkle out of your eye, and the fizz out of your soda. What about being lonely? Do you remember, Pilgrim, "lonely?" I do, especially on the move to Delaware. I was older, more experienced, therefore I had more of a sense of what a "move" really entailed. Our new home was an isolated old farmhouse out in the country. It was the first year that all four children were in school. My daddy had just died of a heart attack at age 59 and that initial winter was long, not only outside, but inside. In this slow adapting, mourning state, my daily prayer, the only one I could mentally form was, "Help me make it through the night." He did. Our Lord did.

Whoa! Wait a minute. Help! This letter is supposed to be an inspirational one. If I keep this up, I'll have to hand out handkerchiefs as door prizes.

And then, there is the scripture that popped into my head yesterday. I was driving to the lake so that I could get away

and write to you. I left a bulldozer digging, workers working, and an insurance architect estimating. We recently experienced a devastating house fire. Thank the dear Lord no one was hurt and furnishings and keepsakes were in storage. But still, it is a big deal. We're looking at at least a year and a half of being displaced persons. I'm sure that fact played a part in yesterday's scripture "pop-up," but you, not the fire, Pilgrim, were on my mind. It's Matthew 8:20. It says, "And Jesus said to him: the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Oh, how sad. I usually read over that verse quickly, for it makes me uncomfortable. Surely it was a misprint, a mistake - surely our Lord didn't have such feelings. Not those kind that I've had, you've had, we've had when we've been uprooted. But, but ladies, the Word says He did. That is the good news for the day. Our Lord did. With that humbling knowledge, uprootedness takes on a whole new meaning and significance. It is a state that Jesus experienced, along with His disciples, past and present. It is a state that Old Testament prophets and patriarchs experienced. It was the "Chosen People's" world. We are in good company. That is why we can use the positive word "pilgrim" or, yes, "newcomer" when talking about our life's journey. You and I have the added advantage and grace of being able to identify with that physical uprootedness. Yes, it is hard. Yes, it is a stretching, growing experience. And that is good. Such movement does help imaginary walls to be broken

down. It does help us to tread on our "turf" more lightly, not possessively. It does help us to become more aware of others, to reach out more quickly, for we know that time is of value and life is ever-changing.

Yes, we are a pilgrim people. Everyone is. We just happen to understand that reality better than most, for we've physically lived it. We are blessed. And I thank the dear Lord for encouraging groups such as Newcomers. Newcomers, not Transplants, Outsiders, Foreigners, Aliens - but positive Newcomers, who reach out to others on the "Pilgrims Way" to help celebrate the journey.

I am your sister in Christ,

Lucy - Bon Voyage