

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

“Should we go or not?” That was the question. It was the last day of our ten-day England-Scotland tour. It had been a fantastic trip, one made even more special by having a dear friend, Carol, as my roommate. On our final day we found ourselves in Edinburgh and instead of touring on the bus with our group, we decided to take the day off and just stroll the streets and enjoy each other’s company. We wandered in to St. John the Evangelist Church and came across a sign outside of the chapel, which stated that there was to be a service at 1:00. We had about 10 minutes to decide the question, “Should we go or not?” We chose to attend, and I’m so glad we did.

In this tiny chapel meditatively sat a minister and we joined him in the pregnant silence of trying to listen to our Lord. After a few minutes, a clock struck one. We all stood. Four or five others had joined us. The service had begun and we came to the “Passing of the Peace.” Carol and I knew what to do in our own tradition. So we gave each other a big hug and said, “The peace of the Lord be with you,” and each responded, “And also with you.” Much to our delight, we discovered this also was customary in this church. We all joined in giving each other warm greetings and when the minister came around to me, I greeted him and he said quietly, “Are you a Franciscan?” I guess he had seen my cross

and I answered, "Yes." And he said, "I'm a Brother of the Society of St. Francis." "Ohhhhhh!"

After the conclusion of the service this Brother asked if we'd like to go and have a coffee at the Friary. We calmly said, "Yes." My interior dialogue, however, was: "Can you believe this coincidence or God accident? Tell me what are the chances that one Alabama Franciscan just happens to be in Edinburgh on a Thursday and decides to go into a church, the one closest to her hotel which happens to be a Scottish Episcopal one that just by chance is getting ready to hold a service in ten minutes and it just happens that the minister in charge is one of the three Anglican Franciscan Brothers in all of Edinburgh who just happens to celebrate this service at this particular time once a week! Hello? By chance? I don't think so! I'd say it was a God-accident."

We had a delightful visit. The Friary was perfectly Franciscan, located right above a Chinese restaurant. Obviously, it was a converted flat. There was nothing fancy in the whole place. It seemed comfortable, simple. He said he thought this was the only chapel where you could be celebrating the Lord's Supper and see what was playing at the movies. We laughed, for sure enough, outside the window you could see a theatre marquee.

Then it was time to say goodbye. And the question, which started this whole adventure was, "Should we go or not?" Thank the dear Lord we had said, "Yes" to this adventure, but

the nagging thought I've had to deal with ever since was what if we had said, "No?" And how often do I say, "No?" How often does my negative response to possible activities block out our Lord's will and His gifts?

Ever since this "happening," I've wanted desperately, Pilgrim, to write to you. This encounter happened over four months ago. I've tried to sit down and write this event out, especially right before a recent five-day short trip to England. It seemed that I had to finish writing about one episode or event before I could move on to another. I really believed this grace gift of a visit was to be recorded. I tried, but it just wouldn't come. That was OK. I knew it would come if it was supposed to. I believed the timing just wasn't right. And sure enough it wasn't, for there was more to the gift.

As I mentioned, I just went on a quick visit to England to see my sister-in-law. I went to an 8:30 service at Poor Clare Convent in Freeland. And I sat with my eyes closed in prayer and heard others coming around and quietly taking their seats. And when I opened my eyes, who was next to me? Well, you've got it! It was that same brother, Brother David Francis! I couldn't jump up and say, "Hi Ya'll" because everyone was reverently quiet. I just did an inward smile and said, "Thank you, Lord. What a wonderful surprise."

After the service, I said "Hello" and that I was the Alabama Franciscan he'd met in Edinburgh just a few months ago. He said he thought he'd recognized me. We quietly

visited for a few minutes and he said he would soon be moving to another Friary and to come visit if ever I got a chance. I said I would. I didn't, however, get the name of the Friary, nor the town nor whether it was in the north, south, east, west part of Great Britain. But you know what, Pilgrim? It doesn't really matter. I laughed to myself and I thought if our Father God wants us to run into each other again, I believe we will - just for the fun of it.

So, what was this all about? I really don't know. All I do know is that it was a delightful encounter, both times. I'm left with a stronger sense of Christian Community. I can imagine those early first century persecuted believers must have been just as excited when they'd see a sign or a symbol on a person and in recognition ask in a whisper - "Are you a Christian?" "Yes."

I want to continue with that enthusiasm when I unexpectedly run into another unknown brother or sister in Christ out in the world. "Are you a Christian?" "Yes." Then let us embrace and celebrate and laugh and sing and worship and pray and jump for joy! Forget this denominational stuff. "Do you love Jesus and is He your Savior?" "Yes." "Me too! Yea! We're kin, in fact, we're not just kissin' kin, we're familial kin, brother or sister in the same family." Wow!

The other thing I'm left with is that our Father God's awesomeness about being in charge of events and activities large or small. He truly is:

omnipresent = all present

omniscient = all knowing

omnipotent = all powerful.

So often I try to limit Him. I do believe our Lord is in all situations and circumstances - the good, the bad, and the ugly. He doesn't cause the sin or evil, but He can and does by the cross, redeem it if asked.

And then I love the sweet, kind, tiny, infinitesimal, adorable detail that this surprise gift represents. What a precious, precious gift only a loving Father would give -- just for the joy of it. It was like receiving a gentle kiss from my daddy, but even better yet, from my Father God. Thank you, Abba. I believe the gift with joy I receive it. May I rejoice and receive and receive -- and always say "yes" to the question, "Should we go or not?" if the activity is of our Lord's doing.

Precious Pilgrim, I am your sister in Christ,

Lucy

P.S. Did I ever tell you about the rainbow on the Sea of Galilee, which I know was meant just for me? Or the phone call of encouragement I received while writing you this letter? Maybe another time, I'm sure you, Pilgrim, also have received surprise little grace gifts given just to you from your Abba Father. May we open our hearts more and more daily to receive His love, so that we can give His love more generously. Peace - Joy - and all Love.