

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

It's another glorious day. A little cloudy, but that just makes this blue pansied garden upon which I gaze seem even bluer. My eyes are drawn to a little bed of these blossoms located against the left-hand wall at my mother's garden. Plopped right down in the middle of these smiling blue-faced flowers is a statue of a little girl. She's sitting with her head bowed. She's gazing upon a bouquet of flowers, which she's holding. She touches a soft spot in my heart. She reminds me of a grace moment, which was right and good and rare. And it happened just last night.

Lucy, my 19-year-old niece, she's a freshman in college and she's home for spring vacation. My mama and I dropped over to see her family for a brief visit. Lucy and I hugged and exchanged a few questions and answers, then joined the rest of the family gathered. There was my sister and her husband and their son, who were joined by his visiting out-of-town sister and brother-in-law, then daughter Lucy and her boyfriend and Mama and me. Did you get that, Pilgrim? We sat on the porch and had a fun visit.

As we began our slow departure, Lucy and her boyfriend headed us off. She had made a CD of their favorite Christian music as a gift for him, which she wanted to share. She sat on the floor while playing her new gift while he shyly, but proudly stood by. I don't know how it happened, but someone must have said something about singing. Lucy asked if we wanted them to sing. We did and

they did. She and Stephen sang one of the sweetest renditions of "Amazing Grace" I think I've ever heard. Lucy, sitting on the floor. Stephen looking down. A tender, touching moment. There was harmony, not just in notes, but in the event itself.

There was no begging, no pleading, no coaxing, there was no guile, no pretense, no pseudo-sophistication, and no false pride -- just a real sweet atmosphere of spontaneous praise and an aura of innocence.

That was the "grace moment" I wanted to remember. The concrete statue of a girl holding a bouquet helped me recall the sweet fragrance of last night's melodic scene. Thank you, Lord -- and thank you, Lucy and Stephen.

A week later I found myself with my husband in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia attending a meeting. Fortunately, I had "free time" scheduled. Oh, and what a rare and wonderful gift scheduled "free time" is. If it's written down, it seems to have more potent possibilities. I mean, it gets my attention. Hurry! Quick! You can go and do whatever you want. You can take off that name sticker and that suit and put on sneakers and slacks and sneak off. And guess what I did? I went meandering. Meandering. Oh, and it was so much fun wandering back and forth, in and out, around and about Colonial Williamsburg. If you had to diagram my trail, it would have been like a butterfly's flight. Hovering here and there, stopping and starting, collecting impressions like pollen.

I came out of one building and guess what? Across the street a crowd of tourists had gathered and guess what they were doing in

the middle of downtown Colonial Williamsburg? Singing "Amazing Grace." Hello? This isn't the Holy Land. What's going on here?

As the group dispersed, I asked one participant what had occurred. She said that the tour guide had told them the story about John Newton, the composer of the hymn, and they had just broken out into his song. Oh. Ah! Spontaneous praise.

At the next day's "free time," I visited the Abby Rockefeller Folk Art Center. There's a painting by an unknown artist there that's still pressing on my memory. It's called "Baby in Red Chair." It's a beautiful, precious, plump, red-cheeked, smiling baby who's sound asleep in a red highchair. It seemed to flesh out and embody for me -- serenity, trust, and innocence.

Then I went downstairs and by chance stumbled across their temporary exhibit called "The Kingdoms of Edward Hicks." There was room after room after room of this man's paintings of the Peaceable Kingdom. This 18th Century Pennsylvania Quaker minister and artist did over 60 of them during his lifetime. They are based on Isaiah 11:6.

*"The wolf will lie down with the lamb.
The leopard will lie down with the goat,
The calf and the lion and the yearling together;
And a little child will lead them."*

Where am I going with this letter, Pilgrim? It seems to be a real meandering on its own. I'd like to try and pull these strands a little closer together before we leave. As Christians, as Resurrection people, we yearn for that "Peaceable Kingdom" to come in. We want

the world both corporately and individually to know this Christ-reigning reality. We want, yearn, to live in it, internally and externally.

The "Baby in the Red Chair" painting seemed to be right on track -- the serenity, the total trust. He knows he's being trusted for and loved. The chair is providing safe boundaries so he can relax and be totally content. He looks like he's sleeping, but maybe he's praying or humming "Amazing Grace." Who knows, for that song sure has been floating up at the most unexpected times recently.

In Isaiah's "Peaceable Kingdom" scene he says, "and a little child will lead them." We know who that Child is, Pilgrim. Our Lord Jesus. Isaiah also says in Chapter 30:20,21. "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left." Doesn't that make you just want to jump for joy on this journey, Pilgrim? Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always." Yes! Now doesn't that make those lions and tigers and bears lie down?

The comedian Jackie Gleason used to say, "Maestro, a little music," and then that large man would glide across the stage. As Christians, on our individual journeys, our traveling music is to be a little different. It's more about listening and being led. Ah, and then -- then by His grace, His amazing grace we can be used to His glory.

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound."

May our individual journeys continue -- grace-filled, Pilgrim.

I am your sister in Christ,

Lucy

*P.S. And what was composer John Newton's story? He was a slave trader and had a conversion experience during a storm at sea. His tombstone reads: "John Newton, Clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned and appointed to preach the faith he had so long labored to destroy."
Ah! Amazing Grace.*