

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

My husband and I are on a weeklong cruise in the Greek Turkish Isles with three other couples. It is a trip of a lifetime. The beauty is indescribable -- the azure crystal-clear water, the stark rugged mountains, the surprise hidden harbors where pastel houses hang.

The visit to the Island of Patmos was an unexpected gift. Our itinerary seems to evolve one day at a time, depending on our captain and the weather. It is a real adventure course. When we, the passengers, learn our daily destination, we run and read the guidebook and then I usually run and sit at the front of the boat and just watch, watch and wait and anticipate. The wind blows through your hair. The sun shines in your eyes. The island slowly comes into view and then the port. You seem to be lulled in as if a magnet is pulling you. It's quite exciting and quite thrilling. What I can't get over is the lack of traffic on the open waters and the unspoiled barren beauty of these islands. This world seems changeless. I truly can imagine passing St. Paul on one of his missionary trips.

Today, however, as I mentioned, my focus has been on John and his isle of exile, Patmos. On arrival, our party took taxis up to the top to the monastery of John and outside of this ancient fortress structure, we were instructed to go to this white angular adobe-like building. We climbed the steep walkway

through the entrance, down a descending hallway, through another door to the left. It led us back outside, then down a steep set of stairs where we came upon the entrance to the cave of St. John.

I'm still holding a strong memory of this place. It is white and bright and light, which seems so odd and inappropriate for a cave. I'm sure the previous strong sun and stucco structure have something to do with this impression, but I believe the real reason was because of the pilgrims already gathered in that holy space and place. You see, there were about 25 men and women seated when we entered. Our little party of eight joined them. We learned from a priest that these Christians were recent converts from Java in Southeast Asia. A guide who also spoke English told about the cave and St. John. There is an actual spot where they think he slept and another area, which could have been used as a stone desk. Whether fact or fiction doesn't matter to me, though knowing the ancient tradition of passing facts down from one generation to the next, I believe the chances are real, Pilgrim. What I found truly awesome was the reaction of these newly baptized Christians to this holy ground. They worshipped with zeal. They sang with gusto. They prayed with fervor. The first chapter of Revelation was read aloud and then translated. There were tears. There were declarations of "Alleluia" and "Amen." I could imagine a similar response to "the Word" in John's time when the gospel fire was just beginning to set the

world ablaze. I know that evangelical atmosphere would have been very similar. Can you sense the excitement of those little pockets of early Christianity? They had to have gathered in secrecy in order to survive the dangers of persecution. A message would have gone out into the community that a letter had arrived from an Apostle. Ah, the excitement, the thrill, the joy that such a decree would have evoked. Each word read of "The Word" would have fanned the fire of faith and helped set their world ablaze.

Ablaze! What I want to take home, what I want to remember and never forget is that strong, fearless sense of the Holy Spirit, Who is active and is alive and is well. If tongues of fire and swirls of wind had blown through that cave today, I wouldn't have been surprised. The atmosphere was that electrifying.

In the past, I've cynically and distantly observed such a world on TV. I've been able to rationalize and to categorize the scenes and then flip to another channel. Then last year our gorgeous, Gothic, stained-glass-windowed church hosted a weekend healing ministry. Wow! We the conservative middle-of-the-road church had a packed house with people being healed and slain in the Spirit left and right! Hello? I had to ask myself, "Where are you going to put and package this episode, Lucy?"

Oh, our Lord is so good. He is so very merciful. He is so kind, so patient and so loving. It was as if He were tenderly

growing me up in this greater understanding, which usually means knocking falsehoods down.

After that expansive weekend, I was left with a deep sense of humility. You know Jesus said to not grieve the Spirit. I think I have grieved Him many times, by trying to limit His power, by trying to understand His power, or even worse, by trying to contain or control His Power. Hello? We're talking about the Power of our Lord God here! Lord, forgive.

In the Old Testament, we're told of those who touched the Ark of the Covenant and were instantly killed and here I've been trying to downplay the Power of our Almighty God's Holy Spirit. I don't think so! Lord, forgive. Because of Christ's cross and love, He does, Pilgrim.

I believe this Isle of Patmos experience was another one of those teaching gifts. He wanted me to know, even in a more profound way, His Holy Spirit's Power. Some of our boat party whispered, "Are they speaking in tongues?" They were. Naturally, I mean, the Holy Spirit was present and when that's the case, anything can happen. Right? Like John writing the Book of Revelation in a cave -- anything can happen.

You know, I'm not a writer, but I sense that I can sometimes write with the help of -- "A Friend." That's with a capital "F." You know, my church is still Gothic and conservative and middle of the road, but I sense that it is now more aflame because of -- "a Friend." That's with a capital "F."

Well, Pilgrim, it's time for bed, but before we end, may I close your letter with this ancient of ancient prayers:

*"Come Holy Spirit,
Fill the hearts of your faithful
And kindle in us the fire of Your love
Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created
And you shall renew the face of the earth.
O God who by the light of the Holy Spirit
Did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
Grant that by that same Holy Spirit
We may be truly wise and ever enjoy
His consolations, through Christ our Lord.
Amen."*

Pilgrim, may His fire continue to blaze. I thank the Lord for today's island cave experience. I thank Him for these fellow friends and pilgrims on this trip. I thank Him for you. And, of course, most profoundly, I thank Him for sending His Son and His Holy Spirit.

Your Sister in Christ,

Lucy

God bless.