

*Come Holy Spirit  
Use me to Your glory*

*Precious Pilgrim,*

*One of my favorite paintings is that of St. John the Evangelist by Rembrandt. For me, it captures the essence of a "listening writer." Oh, and how I yearn and pray to be that! John is depicted as a very old bearded man. He's seated on a bed with one shoe on and one shoe off, holding a pen and pad. Somehow Rembrandt captures John's almost trance-like depth of concentration. You can sense those creative juices at work. He seems to be bodily present in the time and place represented, but his eyes, ah, his eyes are fixed on another world.*

*I first ran across this painting years ago. I was thumbing through a Bible in which each and every illustration was done by Rembrandt. These visual treasures spoke deeply to my soul. I would hurriedly flip the pages of this huge Bible until I came across yet another one of these awesome representations. I'd stop and soak up the image by touching it, praying over it, celebrating it. My verbal response was "yes." "Yes" to the various visual depictions.*

*St. John's portrait was one of the very last. It hit me right in the heart. "Yes," I know that moment, the one Rembrandt was trying to capture and did so aptly. I've experienced such -- rarely, briefly, Pilgrim. I'm writing along like walking through a room whose floor is covered in molasses. Each word is heavy and has to be pulled out. It's drudgery. You feel totally discouraged. You want desperately to put that pen down and run away as fast as you can,*

*but you can't. You must write. You scratch out words. You ball up that piece of paper and throw it away. You start over again and again. You yearn with all of your might to try and capture the sometimes uncapturable.*

*And then, when you least expect it, the words unjam and begin to flow. Words become sentences. Sentences become paragraphs, paragraphs become pages. There is nothing like it. You can't force it. You can't conjure it up or capture it. It just happens and when it does, ah, it is so much fun. You have to get out of the way and just allow it. As I have said, for me, I have found this experience to be a very rare and a very brief one. I am not a St. John or a Rembrandt, but I can recognize what the artist was trying to depict -- divine inspiration.*

*Goodness, that sounds a little heavy and "holier than thou." Doesn't it? And that is all wrong, for when it happens, it is the lightest of all experiences. The words seem to take flight and have a life of their own. There can be no pride, but rather a deep sense of humility. As a Christian writer, I yearn to be used to the glory of God. I start each one of your letters, Pilgrim, by first writing in the top left-hand corner of the page, "Come Holy Spirit, use me to your glory." I could not, cannot begin any other way.*

*The reason this image of St. John comes so strongly upon my mind once more even though I haven't seen it in years is this day I had the awesome privilege of standing in the cave on the Isle of Patmos where St. John wrote the Book of Revelation. Even now, at this very moment, as I write to you, I can close my eyes and the two*

*impressions, the Rembrandt painting and the cave, seem to melt into one. They seem to flesh out each other and transport me to another world, one when a church was just beginning and the Holy Spirit was actively working. But wait, that Holy Spirit activity wasn't like some fireworks with a short fuse, a blast from the past. It wasn't like a light bulb on a timer which only shines at designated times.*

*Listen to what our Lord Jesus said in John 16:5-7: Now I am going to Him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, "Where are you going?" Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you and... John 16:12 & 13 continues-- Jesus says, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes he will guide you into all truth." And Acts records Jesus saying, "John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." In Acts 1:8 Jesus continues, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." Holy Spirit activity -- creativity of Christ -- divine inspiration.*

*Pilgrim, I don't know how to express today what I want to express to you except "Yes." Yes. I think I know what Rembrandt was trying to capture. Have you, Precious Pilgrim, experienced divine inspiration? Whispering seems a little bit more friendly for, goodness gracious, at this point in my life one thing of which I have become keenly aware is my own limitations. I know beyond a*

*shadow of a doubt that sometimes, by God's grace, and I believe by the help of the Holy Spirit, I've been given just the right words to say to a friend who's hurting. You might not even be aware of a situation. You might not even be planning to see her or him, but all of a sudden, they come to mind, seemingly out of the blue and you pick up that phone and call or email or drop in for coffee. And just by chance, I don't think so. It seems to be God's perfect timing. You sense a nudge and you act. Only to later learn by God's grace you were used to His glory or you have sung a song or played an instrument or painted a picture or written a letter and you knew beyond a shadow of a doubt it was a stretch time -- a time in which God intervened and His Holy Spirit seemed to broaden the horizons, the possibilities, the limits of our own known world.*

*That's all I have to say today, Pilgrim. It's hard to capture the uncapturable in words. I wish I could just send you a copy of Rembrandt's painting over the air and we would need to say nothing except "Yes, I know of what he was painting." The Holy Spirit is active. Now, may we be open to Him and may all be to our Lord's glory.*

*I am your sister in Christ,  
Lucy*

*P.S. May I end this time together with this ancient prayer, the one I used for our last letter.*

*Come, Holy Spirit,  
Fill the hearts of your faithful*

*And kindle in us the power of your love.  
Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created  
And You shall renew the face of the earth.  
Oh God, 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*