

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

I just talked on the phone to our youngest son. He recounted his last night's adventure. Apparently, he and his wife Martha were sound asleep and at three a.m. she woke up. She then awakened her husband, for she knew there was someone in the room with them. Sure enough, there was. It just happened to be their thirteen-month-old son, Jud, Jr. For the very first time he had climbed out of his bed, walked through the living room, and entered their bedroom. Oh, I bet he was mighty proud of himself for his father sure was when he did the very same stunt at about the very same age.

That fun little episode wasn't, however, why I got my pen and paper out today; instead it was to tell you about last night's special event. A birthday party was given by my mother-in-law for all of those in the family who had May birthdays. That included one son, one daughter-in-law and if you stretched it out a week on either side of the month, you can add another grandson and granddaughter and myself. With so many honorees, we had an exceptional celebration as you can imagine. Of course, however, who stole the show and were the center of attention were the six grans, three boys, three girls. They now range from age eleven months to seven years and are absolutely adorable. I'm not prejudiced.

We had a quick dinner, quick opening of presents, quick ice cream and quick cake for at the children's ages and stages, all activities have to be done quickly.

After having completed the required birthday present party, we then retired enthusiastically to the walled-in backyard garden. This bounded space is ideal for such a gathering. The children were busy all over the place, some with balls and with trucks. A few had found an elevated path that bordered the flowered gardens and were walking in this circumference. For them, it felt like an adventure walk for the planting was just tall enough to seem like a hidden passage.

We adults gathered at one end and watched their busyness. Only one child remained behind, that was Lucy, our daughter's eleven-month-old crawler and my namesake. We sat next to each other on the ground and watched all the commotion with amazement. It was like a bumper pool game, round and round, up and down, some follow the leader, some independent play. All seemed to be totally oblivious to our watching.

Then, as if a magnet had been switched on, Jud, Jr. started walking from the farthest end towards us. Having just recently learned to walk, his steps were tentative, slow, and deliberate. He looked like a determined young man with a mission. He was a sight for sore eyes. He had on his new birthday clothes that were adorable, but a little big and baggy and in one hand he had a tightly clutched piece of chocolate cake. I don't know how he had escaped the dining table with it over a half an hour earlier. It was obvious that some little morsel had been repeatedly nibbled during this recreation time, for his face was covered in that dark goo.

Closer and closer he came. I was getting myself all ready to embrace him, for I just knew he was coming to love on his "Goo-Goo", or at least that was what I was anticipating. But then I noticed his eyes weren't fixed on me, but rather on his youngest cousin, the seated, red-headed, already beauty queen, Lucy. Sure enough, he came closer and closer, one solid step at a time. And on arrival to his destination, he leaned over and kissed Lucy on the mouth, or kind of on the mouth. It was hard to tell the exact place of contact, for there was a large chocolate smudge left on the majority of her face. She smiled and he smiled. Mission accomplished, he turned and rejoined his other cousins.

Then just last week I spent the night out in the country with Jud Jr. and his parents. It's one of my favorite overnight havens. Their home is tucked in the woods at the end of a long dirt country road. Their nearest neighbor is a herd of grazing cattle. This place is a great equalizer. In just minutes after arrival, city lights and noises and busyness start fading away and the slower pace of country life takes over. You just naturally take off your shoes and walk barefooted. You sip soft drinks instead of gulp them. You eat homemade vegetables freshly picked from Martha's mama's garden. You just kind of "hang out," no real agenda except the joy of being with family. Ah, and the night noises are heavenly or at least as close as we'll come to those sounds on this side of the bar. You sense the world breathing. There are crickets and tree frogs and cows and owls and deer and fox and coyote and trees and leaves and grass and flowers and dogs and

bugs and insects all playing in tune. This night Jud Jr. joined their chorus.

I was sleeping lightly, just enjoying the surrounding sounds. (You know, sometimes the exquisite light of the Lord can be sensed more profoundly in the dark.) All through the night, sporadically I'd hear from Jud Jr.'s adjacent bedroom, "DaDa," "DaDa." It was as soft as a dove cooing, not fretful or anxious, more as if recognition was taking place.

Ah, my precious Pilgrim, it is time to try and bring your today's letter to a close. For me, it's been a soft weaving of three tender gifts given by a grandson: first, a nocturnal adventure walk, then an unsolicited chocolate-covered kiss and finally, a call in the night for "DaDa."

Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for such is the kingdom of heaven." I don't know quite yet what all of these episodes meant. All I do know is that they make me smile inside and out and give me a more profound sense of the heavenly realm. Sweet dreams. Watch out, tonight I might do some night walking, give some chocolate-covered kisses and for sure, call out to our Father God, "DaDa, DaDa." Peace. Ah, the joy of grandchildren. They are great teachers of unconditional love. Ah ha! Maybe that's what this weaving is all about.

*Love, love, your sister in Christ,
Lucy*

*DaDa. DaDa. Might you, Pilgrim, like to join in the call? Jesus said,
"Suffer the little children to come unto Me for such is the kingdom of
Heaven." God bless.*