

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

A mixed bag moment. Stretching out on the ground, looking up in the sky, it's dusk and clouds form. Birds fly overhead. A long Sunday afternoon. What to do alone? Organize? Pay bills? Yuck. Reality is too strong. The wind soothes the hurt, nourishing my soul as if a gentle lover. I will be okay. That is the known fact. I am loved by Love Himself. The Lord is healing. It's just so sad. What happened to my known world, the one that I knew? For 29 years I was a content wife, prepared to go on for eternity. But in four days it will cease. I will sign a paper. The judge states, "The End." But God joined us together; mankind breaks the bond. I had no idea how this world called Divorce felt, worse than a dying, more ragged edges, more extreme peaks and valleys. There's not a clean break. Sad, mad, glad, angry, hurt, happy, furious, too. A mixed bag moment.

Precious Pilgrim,

"Be a big girl." That was the unexpected early morning sweet send-off received by my youngest son. I was to attend my first social outing since my divorce. Oh, of course, I've been out and about, but mainly with family and close friends. My primary activity has been singing. For the past two months, I've been lifting my voice at a church service or practice three days a week. I cannot tell you, Pilgrim, how therapeutic this

has been -- praising the Lord in song.

I'm not really much of a crier, although I've been doing better at this activity. I know there are tears deep down inside me that need to be released, or at least there are emotions that need to float to the surface to make room for the present and future days' experiences. I need to go on and mourn the past and be done with it.

Oh, I know it's not that simple, and those holes in my heart will always be there, but I want to be a forward-facing person. The image that helps me claim this stance is that of Lot's wife. When she turned and yearned for Sodom and Gomorrah, she became a pillar of salt. Forget those decadent cities; for me, that's not the point, but rather, for me, the point is that she became frozen by looking backward in time. I don't want to get stuck. I want to live, celebrate, enjoy the present and look toward the future. The most alive, interesting people I've known during my lifetime have been such dwellers.

You'll be glad to know, Pilgrim, that this will be the last letter you will receive whose primary theme is "The Divorce." I made a commitment to myself that I'd write to you about this sad world. I also made a commitment to myself that it would all be written in this little 7 x 5 stationery notebook that has a pretty rose on each page. When I come to its end, which is just a few pages away, I'll then plant my feet forward, facing forward. Of course, there will be times when the "Big D," Divorce, might be mentioned, for it is now part of the fabric of

my life, but I will not let it become my focus.

The last time I wrote to you, Pilgrim, was two days before the divorce was finalized. My prayer was that the marriage would unravel softly, once I knew its end was inevitable. It did. It took less than three months. It was thankfully settled fairly, quietly, and out of courts. My family has been unbelievably supportive. (We are now in a "grieving-healing" stage.)

The next day after it was finalized I drove to Cullman, Alabama to the Benedictine convent for the weekend. No, I was not and am not planning to be a Protestant nun (I know my children are relieved to hear that). It's just that I thought it was important to acknowledge that a big event had taken place in my life and I needed some closure. A silent retreat in this beautiful sanctuary seemed appropriate. I attended their four daily services, read, slept, walked. I carried a chair right into the middle of their rose garden and sat for two hours just letting the beauty and the scent remind me of God's love. I walked slowly, deliberately to their cemetery, thinking it would be a good place to mourn the death of my marriage. I know that sounds a little melodramatic, Pilgrim, and it was. I was really working myself up to having a good cry.

On the way, I was passed by an 80+ year-old nun with her walking cane. Her destination was the same as mine. And when I arrived at the gated field of white crosses, she asked if I wanted to see where her sister was buried. I said, "Yes." She

told me they had both entered the convent as young girls and that she visited her grave daily. She then proceeded to give me a tour of the grounds and made wonderful comments about various Benedictine sisters and their precious lives. It was quite a witness talk. We enjoyed each other's company and planned another walk together for the following day. It was even more delightful. Instead of having a single morose visit to the cemetery, I was given the gift of a fellow sojourner who just happened to be farther along on her journey. I'll never forget this spry sister in Christ with a walking cane. She'd suffered from a broken hip and a broken leg, but neither was slowing her down. We not only walked the paved road, but also took a wooded path. She reminisced about what the grounds were like when she was a girl and her community was larger. She'd stop occasionally and with agility lean all the way over and pick up a nut. She handed me a few, which I still carry in my purse.

Yes. It was a blessed time. It was a good time to stop and to mourn. It was a good place to stop and begin a new life, a single life.

I'm just about out of paper. You know what that means. This letter is soon coming to an end. This forward-facing butterfly needs to move on. Oh sure, I find my wings dragging in the mud occasionally and slowing me down. It's amazing how quickly and unexpectedly those sink holes show up. I'll just be cruising along and "Wham," a sad memory or a regret will

pull me down and I just have to pull myself up and try to catch the Wind, God's Holy Spirit Wind, or set my eyes on the Son, God's Son, and continue the journey.

A symbol that I've found helpful during this sad transitional season was seen at the convent. There is a statue of Jesus in the main hall. The convent is called "Sacred Heart," so on the statue Jesus' heart is depicted. To me, it looked like a sun with rays coming forth. Of course, it is to represent Jesus' loving heart for us. I mentally take this heart symbol and personalize it by letting the round sun-like orb represent a room where the Lord, Jesus and I are safely sitting together and let the rays represent where piercing arrows of life's trials and tribulations have penetrated this safe haven. By God's healing grace, these avenues of pain can become routes by which His Light can shine most brightly. Pilgrim, do you have some of these avenues that the Lord has healed and that He's using you? I'm at the end of the paper so you know what that means. Your letter is finished. God bless.

*I am your facing forward,
In the present, by God's grace,
sister in Christ,
Lucy*