

Creativity

There have been a few of us coming into our community who have felt, that whatever type we were, or were not, we were not creative. The first test came when a Sister, or a Brother, had a birthday. We don't buy birthday cards! This left us with the other alternative, making one. We don't buy special packs to card-make that, in the end, prove more expensive than buying one. It is amazing how creative you become, as the date of someone's birthday looms nearer and nearer.

It isn't only the card that requires creativity. Birthdays are special and we make them so. Life is a precious gift. We celebrate with a three course meal in the evening. Three courses are reserved for birthdays, Christmas and New Year only! The table is decorated with bright serviettes, a candle and flowers. We begin by singing Wesley's birthday hymn. Then, we read the psalm that corresponds to the birthday year that is being celebrated. This is followed by a prayer thanking the Lord for the Sister or Brother's life and committing the future year into God's hands. Then the feast begins! In all of this there is a surprising amount of creativity. A Sister who has never arranged a flower in her life, finds she has to do it. The table usually looks exquisite. The meal itself often has to be led by the imagination. We don't spend a large amount. The ideas for the menu come, the special meal is prepared and everyone tucks in!

After the feast, we gather in our Bethany lounge. There are flowers, pictures, a cloth on the coffee table with serviettes neatly placed between plates, awaiting the birthday cake. This is often a cake that has been given to us but it is the decoration of it that makes the difference – very creative! Then, we pass the cards around. It is quite amazing the gifts we discover, as they appear for the first time, for all to see. We discovered artists in our midst that had hidden their talent, creativity in the choice of pictures, or words and the ability to use them in a meaningful way, and often small gifts, on which we had spent very little, or quite often made ourselves. Of course, mistakes happen but we are not competing



with one another. Once, a Brother launched out into oil painting, not realising how long it takes to dry. The card still wet, he gave it to the Sister, but put a little note beside it saying, 'Do not touch!' Unfortunately the note wasn't noticed by 'the birthday child', as our dear Mary Sisters in Germany always addressed the one who had a birthday whether they were three, or eighty-three. The beautiful picture ended up with a thumb mark, which can still be seen to this day because no-one throws out a picture in oils, even it has a thumb-print.

Sometimes, the card itself may also be the gift, as a post-it note, which can later be removed, carries the greetings. Years ago, one of our Sisters did this in a welcome card for a Sister from another community. Sometime later, she paid a visit to a friend and there, by her bed, was the card she had made! We are not sure how many it had blessed before it returned to the one who had originally made it! Creativity is part of living in simplicity. It

encourages the childlike attitude Jesus so commended. We don't have to spend a lot of money, in order to enjoy a big occasion.

On Ascension Day, this year, the service on Radio 4 was from St Martin in the Fields. (We also don't have television and are quite happy without it.) The preacher was Bishop James Jones. In his sermon, he used the phrase, 'The creativity of love'. The heavenly Father created our beautiful world as a love-gift. I think without exception, we have all come to a deeper appreciation of nature, as we ourselves have lived more creatively. In these months, when many of us are thinking of holidays, it is good to be quiet and still, thanking our Creator God.

But 'the creativity of love' is so much more than that. It is the way that we all, as Christians, are called to live. The Father showed us the way when he gave his beloved Son for our salvation. There is no end to the ways that we can love creatively. It is the sign of a church that is alive and listening to the Holy Spirit, likewise a community. It keeps us in the spring-time of the presence of God. The love of God in us is creative; it always sees new ways to tell others about Jesus, or to serve this fallen world. It worships in a way that is fresh and lovely.

What we must not do is stop the flow of creativity by our anger or resentment, or any other wrong attitude. We are the children of God living in his light and his creativity. Why be drawn into the darkness?