

## Jesus Saviour

She was to have a profound effect upon us through the years, as a close friend and a spiritual mother. Our introduction to her was one of those 'God happenings' that we didn't anticipate and did not expect. Two of us who were still at that time Wesley Deaconesses were obliged to go to Convocation in the South of England. We went reluctantly but had no choice. We realised that we were very near the branch house of the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary and, as we knew one of the Sisters, we decided to visit them. When we arrived the door was opened by a Sister we did not know, who was newly arrived from Germany. We were invited in. We had no intention of sharing anything about the community, which was still in its fledgling stages. To our surprise she quickly realised who we were and said that she had been praying for us. Before we knew where we were, we were sharing all our problems, and one was major, with her. She didn't hesitate in giving us the benefit of sound advice. Thus began our relationship with her. When we look back now to that first visit we know that it was a turning point in our community.

So we sent an invitation asking her to visit us. We were floundering in our relationships and we knew it. Obvious as it may seem now we were overlooking the recognition of our sin, as blind as the Pharisees who are described in the gospels. It is easy to say glibly, "I am a sinner". It is not sufficient. From her own experience she shared her difficulties when she was a young Sister in a newly born community. She paved the way for us to be honest and real. One of her phrases that will remain with us forever was, "No excuses". That meant that we took full responsibility for our self-pity, pride, jealousy, impatience. Another marker in the sand was her warning to put a full stop after, "but" i.e. "I was resentful but it was because someone caused it. To blame someone else was adding sin to sin!

The word, "sin" is not so popular these days but redemption is at the heart of our Christian faith. Jesus died to save us from our sin. The wonderful fact is that he does but not if we are not honest in acknowledging and confessing it. We are not living in the joyful assurance of forgiveness. Our lives began to change. This is not to say that we became aware of all our sins in one go! We learned to listen to the Holy Spirit warning us when our attitudes were wrong. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit was given a helping hand by Sister Divina, not much escaped her notice. We were thankful (most of the time!) for her honesty. We had to acknowledge, that even when we were not thankful, it was necessary! Only a friend who loves us dearly will tell us our faults. As well as knowing she loved us, we knew that she loved the Lord Jesus with all her heart.

Another area, for which we will be eternally thankful, is she taught us how to re-act, or not re-act, when another person is difficult. She seriously warned us not to be drawn into the darkness but to place the cross, or the blood of Jesus, between us and them. From this place of safety, in prayer, we could bless them. Instead of feeling resentful, afraid, self-pitying when anyone accused us or was prickly we were free and could carry on, unperturbed, except for a rightful, prayerful concern for the person concerned.

A phrase that we will always associate with her is, "He (God) faithfully humbles us". We are all inclined to get too big for our boots! No-one likes to be humiliated but it

happens, from time to time, in most of our lives and we can be thankful, the old enemy pride is dealt another blow. There can be little doubt that pride, one way or the other, is at the root of many of our problems.

When she returned to her motherhouse in Darmstadt we were thousands of miles apart. It did not seem to make much difference, although at the time we were devastated that she would no longer be here in the UK. She had an exceptionally good memory and years later she knew exactly where our weaknesses lay. This was the fruit of her love for us. She wrote letters, we spoke on the phone and from time to time travelled to Germany to see her.

In her nineties, she drew alongside us when we faced death for the first time in our community and that of a young and gifted Sister. She loved us through it. Now, she too is in heaven. Two of our Sisters travelled to her funeral held in the Motherhouse Chapel in Darmstadt. Yet, she lives, in our hearts and we will forever be grateful to the heavenly Father for the 'God happening' that brought us together and all she taught us.

May you know Jesus as your Saviour this Christmas setting you free from sin.

