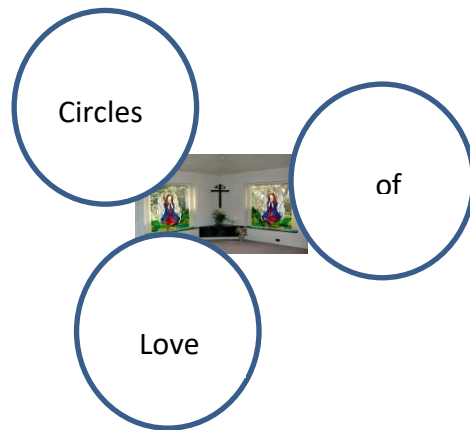


# Straight lines and Circles

We often share that before we founded the community, all we had was a dream – a dream of a group of Sisters living together and a house of the love of God. We didn't feel that it was a vision that we had to work hard to achieve. If we had done that there would have been, at best, anxiety and, at worst, panic. As the dream began to unfold we had no aim, we let it unfold and tucked in behind, so to speak. We were saved from what would have been a scary list - we had no money, would have nowhere to live (quite difficult without the former) and there was no community! When we were asked some years later, by officialdom, to put our aim on paper, we were stuck. There was genuine panic. We didn't know what to write. It was only when we began to see that we were working, through the grace of God, another model that is the Lord at the centre, around him the community; around the community all our visitors and so on, in ever expanding circles. The Lord's plan became clear even to us. It had happened, as we had loved him and followed him.



A young friend of ours, an officer in the army, told us that the training he had been given enabled him to organise anything, even a beauty contest! Basically, it was defining the required end object and moving in as straight a line, as possible, towards it. That may be useful sometimes especially if you have to organise a competition, of one sort or another, but it has its limits spiritually. He later became a vicar and like us, he discovered that with Jesus, there was another way.

The heavenly Father had a dream, too – of a people who loved him and loved others, who were gentle, patient, kind and lovers of peace. It wasn't happening. The time came to act, he sent his beloved Son into our world to be the Way and to show us the way. At Christmas we celebrate the gift of the Lord Jesus and the love of the Heavenly Father. Jesus too worked the model of the circle. The Father was at the centre of all he did, he acted only in obedience to him. Around him he gathered three close friends and a community of twelve and some close friends. The circle grew larger, as crowds surrounded them and Jesus loved them. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."<sup>1</sup> Matt 9:36. The Kingdom of God has radiated out, in circle upon circle, until it has included even us.

The opposition to Jesus came from those who knew their aim. When the baby, our little Christchild, was born in Bethlehem it was Herod. He knew his aim, to rule. Later it was the religious folk. They also knew their aim. It was to be holy. Theirs was the straight line to holiness, as they thought, yet it brought them into conflict with the Son of God, Jesus.

There are lessons for us in all this. We look at some of the wonderful words in the Bible, "Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid".<sup>2</sup> John 14:27. "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete"<sup>3</sup> John 15:13. We dream – how wonderful. It is a good, God-given dream. At the same time we are often far from peaceful and not exactly radiating joy, either. The next downward step takes place, although we are often so confused that we see it as being upward, that word, "ought" creeps in. I ought to be like this, or that, and so we struggle to achieve. We are aiming at peace and joy, to please God and ourselves, but it doesn't work.

One writer wrote, "If I make these words into a measuring stick which I beat myself with, I lose the dream, the one which will ultimately change me. These words lift me, rather than popping me on the head and forcing me back down." She continues, "We lift our eyes from what we are, we drop the stick and we dream true dreams of what we actually desire ---- and this we find in God. It is a very restful thing to realise that all of the things we so desperately want are found in one Being."<sup>4</sup>

It is to that one Being, the compassionate Lord Jesus, that we turn. When we love him first and our eyes are on him, we will become loving to others, peaceful and joyful. This is grace. When Jesus said, "Come to me and I will give you rest"<sup>5</sup>, he meant it. We don't have to struggle to be good Christians.. In fact we can forget it. Jesus will do it in us.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt 9:36

<sup>2</sup> John 14:27

<sup>3</sup> John 15:13

<sup>4</sup> Trees tall as Mountains Rachel D Ford

<sup>5</sup> Matt 11:2