

Sisters of Jesus Way

Advent 09



Our dear friends,

May you have a blessed Advent and amidst all the busyness find a space to draw near to Jesus as we approach the celebration of Christmas. We would like to thank you for your friendship, prayers and help in many practical ways this last year.

Much has happened since our last letter. We were grateful when our builders arrived and work on extending the sunlounge in Redacre began. On its completion a few weeks later it was soon in use. It has been popular with those who have stayed with us. We were also able to refurbish the sitting room upstairs for the princely sum of £100. The sunlounge cost slightly more! We are grateful that the heavenly Father provided for both.

The other news is that at last we have a website, www.redacre.org.uk It is something that we have had in mind to do for a long time. When we took the plunge it was easier than we had anticipated! We are grateful to Andrew Perry who set it up for us. We felt God's hand was on it from the beginning. We mentioned to him that a friend had booked us a domain name a number of years ago. Obviously he had to be contacted. When we mentioned his name and that he lived some distance away, to our amazement, Andrew not only knew him but said that he would be meeting him the next week way down on the South Coast. God is good.

We sincerely hope that the website will be used not only for information, such as our special weekends, but as a means of encouraging others in the faith. Here we especially had you all in mind. As you know we have not felt that the Lord was leading us to have associates in a formal sense but we know that informally, many to whom this letter goes, are associated with us and find their spiritual home here. So please use the website. We will try to keep adding to it. There is one page with a helpful word for each day. We are quite a way short of the required 365! But it is growing and that is our aim!

We have been asked by a number of friends to publish our previous newsletters. We haven't managed to collect them into a book form yet but it is easier to do it online. We are giving each newsletter a title that describes the theme.

Perhaps, because of our dress, strangers sometimes start to chat to us. Often they ask questions. Where it is appropriate we are now giving our web address. We hope that it will be a means of evangelism. For those of you who do not use a computer please forgive our enthusiasm and the space taken up with this subject.

Now we turn our attention to a subject that is important for all of us. Recently we were in a car and the driver switched on some music. It was one of the old hymns but played in a lively way and with beautiful background music. Some of you will know the words, "All to Jesus, I surrender, I surrender all". It seemed very apt because this was the theme that we were thinking about with this letter in mind. Perhaps we are not being too farfetched if we say that we felt that this was a confirmation.

If we are honest, many times we have a good sing and mean every word at the time but translating this into real life passes us by. When we surrender all to Jesus it is a lifetime commitment. The word "surrender" or even another word "yield" is not in the New Testament. St John uses the word "abide" or "remain" in Jesus, suggesting the closest of intimate relationships with the Lord and St Paul writes often of being "in Christ". This suggests a similar relationship. Implicit in both of these is that we are fully surrendered or yielded to the Lord.

Sometimes we are urged to take all our sin to the cross. This is true but examined closely this particular way of expressing the gospel can lead to difficulties. The Lord doesn't only want our sin, he wants all of us. Apart from that we cannot pluck our sin out and take it in our hand, so to speak, to the cross. If we could do that we could take it out anyway and we wouldn't need a Saviour. We can only come to the Lord who died on the cross for sinners

and ask for his mercy and forgiveness. Wrong attitudes are deeply embedded in us all. They are part of us, rooted deep within. Our case would be quite hopeless without Jesus. With him it is full of hope. He can't take our sin without taking the rest of us, as well! Jesus says, "Come to me". He is the good and kind physician.

In a similar way we may try to improve our virtues before coming to the Lord, mistakenly thinking that we have to be good by our own efforts. If we take this path it is a long road ahead, two steps forward, and before we know where we are, two steps back. In real life this translates, 'I managed to control my temper today'. Next day – 'blown it again, I was irritable with everyone'. Immediately the 'good' self is vocal suggesting that it was all caused by tiredness. We excuse ourselves. Underneath however there is still a nagging sense of guilt. We could give many other examples. Being a Christian is one big struggle. There is no joy or divine light-heartedness. This is life when we try to be on the surface what we know we aren't underneath. There is a better way, a dearer voice than the many voices within us. It is the voice of the Lord Jesus, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest". Matt 11:28. St John wrote, "His commands are not burdensome". 1 John 5: 3. There is rest when we come to Jesus.

Yet Jesus also warned us to count the cost. What is this cost? It is very obvious in the case of, for instance, Muslim background believers who for love of Jesus lose their family, often their livelihood and their reputation. Sometimes it is their life as well. This happened to Jesus, when yielded to the Father's will, he was misunderstood by his family, lost his friends and in the end his life. In the face of this, the cost for us appears insignificant.

Although most of us would agree that it is becoming tougher for Christians in the UK it is still easy compared to the suffering of Christians in many countries. Life becoming tougher for Christians here is not necessarily a bad thing. It fits more easily with the Gospel. Jesus warned that we would be persecuted. Suffering taken from the hand of God tends to purify the church, sorting out the wheat from the chaff. It does this in our own lives also.

The cost for many, such as the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-23) is much more personal. Jesus said, "Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple". Luke 14:33. This includes not only all we possess but also our plans and dreams. The call of Jesus is radical; it is yielding everything including our will to the Lord. It is only those who have yielded their wills to God who know his peace. As Christmas comes and we sing carols such as "In the bleak mid-winter" with the words, "what can I give him – give my heart" may we bring joy to the Lord Jesus by meaning what we sing.

The cost comes too in loving. There must be no exception. This is impossible, unless we live so close to Jesus that his love and compassion flows through us. Our hearts are cluttered with old resentments, prejudices, judgemental attitudes, dislikes, curiosity, do-gooding that is patronising, selfishness and much else. It all has to die. We cannot take on all the needs of the world but through the grace of God we can touch with his love those whom he places in our path.

Early one morning we heard a Bishop speaking on the radio. His tongue slipped when he was speaking. Out slipped the word "resent". He hastily corrected himself. It spoke volumes about the hurt caused to him not by the world but other Christians. When we ride roughshod over others, driving through our own agendas, someone is going to be hurt. This is not the Way. "Beloved, let us love one another." 1 John 4:7. We yield to Love and to being a channel of his love.

"Let love be born this Christmas
within my heart and mind
a love that no knows no limits,
a love that is divine".

Geoffrey Rand (Carol Praise 186)

May the Lord bless you this Advent,

Sisters of Jesus Way.

