

Sisters of Jesus Way

Advent 07

Our dear friends,

May you have a blessed Advent, joyful Christmas and the peace of God in the New Year.



We are aware that many of our friends have faced sadness and loss – the letters come, the emails, the telephone calls, often requesting prayer. May the “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort” comfort you in all your troubles.¹ Our prayer is that the Lord will give you strength and courage for the days ahead. He is our rock in all the storms of life. He is faithful and we can trust in him.

Some of you will be spending time here in Advent, drawing apart from the busyness of December to spend time with the Lord. For those of you who are not, we hope that reading this letter will bring you his peace. Put to one side the shopping list, the cards not written and all the anxiety. Make that cup of tea or coffee and find a quiet place! Perhaps, if you do this, even if it is for the shortest of short time, the letter will be like an oasis where you will find refreshment.

We have already mentioned that word “trust” (“he is faithful and we can trust him”). Without trust we flounder and fall, overcome by our fears, weighed down by circumstances and defeated by all that life throws at us. We fall into despair, crushed and overwhelmed. The little Christchild will soon bring a glimpse of light, love and healing to a broken world. To those of us who know him, he comes each day, bearing in his heart the sorrows that overwhelm us, the fears that paralyse us and the despair that in our darkest moments overcomes us.

The Lord Jesus says to us, “Trust in God, trust also in me”.² We could perhaps, also heed the words of Isaiah, uttered in a crisis of his day to a weak and doubting king. “If you do not stand firm in your faith you will not stand at all”.³ If we are honest with ourselves we are often more like the hesitant, mistrustful king than the strong faith-filled Isaiah.

Trust strengthens as we become more deeply rooted in the love of God. We can imagine the big bad wolf saying to Red Riding Hood, “trust me” with a big toothy grin! In a pantomime all the children would be yelling at her, “Don’t trust him”. Why not? Because we all know – his heart was filled with evil designs!

We trust God because his heart is only love. The reason for our confidence is his love for us. The psalmists knew this. “I trust in your unfailing love,”⁴ We are urged to put “our trust in God’s unfailing love.”⁵ We stand resolutely on all that Scripture teaches despite all that is happening around us and within us, “God is love.”⁶

The Lord Jesus tells us again and again that we are loved. “The Father himself loves you because you have loved me.”⁷ “As the Father has loved me so I have loved you.”⁸ “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid you are worth more than many sparrows.”⁹

The Lord has many ways of showing his love and one is a word from Scripture coming to us when we need it most. This has happened to us many times as a community. A few years ago our kitchen badly needed upgrading and enlarging. We didn’t have the finance. One day we went into our office and there was a scrap of paper lying on the desk. On it were written the words, “My God will meet all your needs.”¹⁰ We never discovered who had written it.

A lady shared with us that she had been in hospital feeling low, discouraged and afraid. Each day her hair became thinner and thinner. She opened the Bible reading notes that she had by her bedside. She read, “The very hairs of your head are numbered”. She knew that the Lord was with her; he knew all that was happening. We could tell many such encouraging stories and so we are sure could you. He is a living God who speaks to his children, who helps us when the going is rough.

The psalmist says, “Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you.”¹¹ Mornings can be difficult. What do you do when you feel that you cannot face the day? Try thinking about the love of God and his goodness rather than letting dark anxious thoughts influence the whole day. Take a verse on the love of God and make it your own, perhaps one that we have mentioned already and return to it often during the day until it becomes part of you. When the storms rise or you encounter the wilderness-places then the word will be deeply embedded in your heart and enable you to trust. As Jeremiah writes, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when the heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”¹²

It is wisdom to practice trust in small things so that should the big thing come we are ready. We have learned that when building, preparation is of paramount importance. It may be a long time before the first bricks are laid but much work has been done. It is the same with faith. Possibly this last year has held nothing more traumatic for us than losing the car keys, the computer crashing or the washing machine breaking down. It is a good exercise to ask ourselves how we fared in these minor crises. When we trust God the worst excesses of panic and anger are avoided through his grace. They become like a school teaching us trust.

Sometimes our trust is misplaced. We trust material possessions, other people or status. Our security can be in ourselves, our ability to cope, our strength, our will-power or even positive thinking. It is to the humble who know their need of him that the Lord Jesus comes. Trust and humility go hand in hand. Why live in a false security when we can be secure in the living God? “God gradually takes away our supports.” It is his mercy because in a crisis they would not hold us. “What resource do you suppose there is, save that of making up our minds to put ourselves completely and delightedly into the hands of God?”¹³

Trusting the Lord leads us in the pathways of peace. We see the unseen hand of the Lord in busy days. Circumstances unexpectedly change and suddenly everything is easier. We can’t quite believe it! It happens so often when we trust him that it can only be a loving Father caring for his children. Anything that concerns us concerns him, “Surely God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid.”¹⁴

Finally – our news. There has been the joy of a second Bridal Consecration and also a celebration when we welcomed two new Followers of the Lamb. Many visitors and small groups have shared our home, some old friends and others with us for the first time. We have led quiet days or days of teaching and witness both here and elsewhere. The builders are here again as we write. Electricians, fire and burglar alarm engineers, roofers, glaziers have all been part of the scene these last weeks. We can think of one instance in particular when the timing was little short of miraculous. We thank the Lord.

One day the father of one of the Sisters who was helping us lost his gold wedding ring. He had been to the tip with another Sister. Praying fervently for the assistance of the Holy Spirit she returned to the busy and crowded tip. As she searched she saw it lying very obviously on the dusty ground. Perhaps, the angels had protected it. Great was the joy and thanksgiving when she returned with it in her hand.

Quite a number of our friends have enquired about our cat and our new dog Thomas. They are now best friends, most of the time! Thomas plods around behind the cat - her faithful swain. She deigns from time to time to give him a kiss on the nose. The cat drinks his water and he, given half a chance, steals her food but she bears him no ill-will. We can learn from them!

But to more serious matters – we close with a word to hold on to as you go into the New Year not knowing what it will bring.

“In quietness and trust is your strength.”¹⁵

May the Lord fill you with joy and peace as you trust in him.

The Sisters of Jesus Way.

1 2 Cor.1:3

2 John 14:1

3 Is.7:9b

4 Ps.13:5

5 Ps.52:8

6 1 John 4:8

7 John 16:26

8 John 15:9

9 Luke 12:6,7

- 10 Phil.4:19
- 11 Psalm 143:8
- 12 Jer.17:7-8
- 13 Letters of Direction pg77 Abbe de Tourville
- 14 Is.12:2
- 15 Is.30 :15