

Sisters of Jesus Way

Summer message 2009



Our dear friends,

We hope that you will enjoy summer days and for those who are going away on holiday that it will bring refreshment physically and spiritually. For those who are staying at home, especially if you are city bound, perhaps you will be able to spend a few days or a day here with us, enjoying our beautiful garden and soaking in the beauty of the estuary.

We want to express our thanks to all those dear friends who have helped us during the last months. We could not have managed without you. We are conscious too of many prayers upholding us.

Easter meant more to us than ever this year and although we didn't have an official retreat the house was full of guests. Together we accompanied the Lord Jesus to Gethsemane and on his passion way to the cross. It was moving on Good Friday afternoon to see everyone kneeling one by one before the cross and placing a red rose, a symbol of our love, at the feet of our Lord. Our Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday is holy. On Easter Sunday we stepped into a chapel with so many flowers that it seemed as if we were in the garden where Jesus met Mary.

The heavenly Father blessed us with sunshine for our Walking and Praise Weekend. The seals swam merrily in the sea close to us on Hilbre Island, as with the sunset painting the sky orange, gold and pink, our songs of praise and adoration echoed in the evening air. The next day a picnic for over twenty was enjoyed in a buttercup and clover meadow overlooking the estuary, followed by a walk along the beach.

Our Pentecost Retreat was held two weeks prior to this. We were struck again how simple it all was, that first Pentecost. There were no committees, endless discussions or ten point plans. There was a one point plan given to them by Jesus and they stuck to it. They prayed and waited for the Holy Spirit. The heavenly Father did not disappoint them, the Spirit came and the church took off – unstoppable! It all sounds so simple and it was. Times have changed; we live in a more sophisticated society so perhaps we need our ten point plan! But Pentecost leaves us with an uneasy feeling that we are missing something somewhere.

We don't take many engagements outside the house but occasionally we sally forth! A deanery asked us if we could lead an evening on contemplative prayer. Some of us find quietly coming into the presence of the Lord the most helpful way into prayer. On the strength of this we accepted the invitation.

However the Sister who had volunteered to speak kept wondering how she would give a talk of any length with only the limited knowledge that she had. The Lord is merciful. As the day approached and she was still staring at a blank piece of paper she glimpsed an advertisement, in literature that had just arrived from another community, about a newly published book on contemplative prayer. A phone call explaining the dilemma elicited prompt action and the book was here the next day.

One of the phrases that stood out in this book was "God within". Phrases similar to this were hijacked by the New Age movement and caused some of us to back off. Of course New Agers mean something completely different from the Christian concept of the indwelling God. Long after the evening speaking on contemplative prayer had passed the phrase lingered – "God within".

Along came preparation for the Pentecost celebration. Suddenly the Scriptures seemed full of "God within". "But you know him (the Spirit of Truth) for he lives with you and will be in you." (John 14:17.)

“I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.” (John 14:20.) “Remain in me and I will remain in you.” (John 15:4.) “If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit”. (John 15:5.) In Romans 8:9-11 St Paul writes of the implications, “if the Spirit of God lives in you”, “if Christ is in you” and “if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you.”

This may all read as if we are stating the obvious. We may have talked of Jesus living in our hearts since our earliest days. Like the day of Pentecost where we perhaps know the story too well and the application not sufficiently; has this become a phrase we know too well and the implications in our life too little? The consequences of God indwelling us are immense and wonderful.

Most of us in our hearts want to be better Christians and are often disappointed when we fail. Perhaps the reason is that we are trying to live the Christian life in our own strength. The Lord Jesus has given us the wonderful gift of His Spirit indwelling us. We don't have to struggle and strive or become caught up with introspection, our thoughts revolving around ourselves. Instead we draw near to him in prayer so that our lives are, so to speak, in step with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth within us and strongholds, which we all have and which perhaps we have battled with for years, begin to tumble down. Our egos begin to crumble. We know without a shred of doubt that the Holy Spirit has performed this miracle. We are so grateful to the Lord that we speak with greater conviction; our lives begin to be transformed. We become radiant with love for Jesus. It is His doing not ours.

Who heals our wounds, and we all have wounds, but the tender, loving Holy Spirit? Deep in many hearts there is the question, “Who loves me?” The answer is the Lord Jesus and it is the Holy Spirit in our hearts who mediates that love to us in such a way that there will come a day when we will never ask that question again.

The Holy Spirit is our Wisdom and our Counsellor. He directs and guides us. There have been those who have said they were led by the Holy Spirit and it has been obvious that they were not. It is the proud who go astray. If, living in humility, which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, we are willing to be open and submissive within the community of Believers then we will not go astray. A far greater danger lies in ignoring his guidance and wisdom. We miss the great adventure of following Jesus. What a privilege is ours! We trust our Helper, our Teacher and our Advocate living within us.

The Holy Spirit indwelling the Church has tremendous implications and so does the Holy Spirit indwelling our hearts. We are not alone working for God. God is within us working through us and on us.