

Sisters of Jesus Way

Summer Newsletter 2016

Our dear Friends,

We love, 'our estuary', as we call it - in other words, the Dee Estuary, which we can see clearly from many of our rooms and the garden. Today it is calm and still. There is a timelessness to the ebb and flow of the tides. Everything may change but that remains the same. Perhaps that is why it speaks to our spirits. It draws us close to God, the Eternal One who does not change. In his changelessness we find our peace.



Change is part of our earthly existence. Sometimes it is change that we welcome and sometimes it is change that we would not have chosen. Since we last wrote to you, or even met you, this has been true for us, as it has been true for many of you. Perhaps, even as you read this, your mind will go back to an unexpected event, a challenging few weeks or even a complete change of direction in your life. There will be others for whom life has stayed the same, calm and steady, just as our estuary is this morning.

We know that the estuary is not always as it is today; sometimes it is whipped up by the wind and the water reflects the grey of the sky. This is like our lives. We don't know when we will encounter a storm but we can be certain that it will happen. The Lord does not spare us from suffering, but he protects us in it. The old words from Deuteronomy are as true as when they were first written, "Underneath are the everlasting arms". (Deut. 33:27) It doesn't matter how far we sink in despair, grief or pain, the arms of the Lord God are there.

It isn't only change in our personal lives. There has been change in our country since the Brexit vote and this is set to continue. Sometimes, it has been chaotic. You may have wondered, as we certainly did, what the next shock would be, when we listened to the news. Internationally too, there has been one unexpected event after another, so it seems. Often this has been of a violent nature. There have been shockwaves reverberating throughout the world. Fenelon, centuries ago, wrote wisely, "You yourself must endure the painful process of change ---- God wants to build a relationship with you that is based on faith and trust in him. God uses the disappointments, disillusionments, and failures of your life to take your trust away from yourself and help you put your trust in him". It is only the Kingdom of God that is unshakable.

As many of you are aware, every Sunday morning we take a word for the week from a plate that is passed around our chapel. These are paraphrases of verses from the Bible. They are all different and sometimes amazingly apt for the individual concerned. One of these reads, "He is with you in the desert place, shielding and caring for you". It is taken from Deut. 32:10. When all around is changing, or has changed, we can feel, at the same time, that we are in a spiritual wilderness. Even the comfort of the presence of God seems to depart.

From our earliest Christian days we have been reminded that faith is not feeling. Yet even when we feel that we are in an arid desert, the writer of Deuteronomy reminds us that God is shielding us and caring for us. We have experienced this again and again. He will always care for his own.

There is much around God's little family here in Redacre that has changed these last few months. Our Followers of the Lamb suffered an unexpected shock when the news came that another of their number had died, the second within twelve months. Sue Brown has been one of the Followers for many years and our relationship with her goes back to the early days of our community. When we decided to ask a small number of women who were helping us and praying for us, to form into a little band, within a short time Sue heard the call of God and became one of the early Followers.

She suffered from severe diabetes for many years. When the Lord called her home it was, nevertheless, a tremendous shock to her family and those who knew her, as it happened suddenly and unexpectedly. Our love and prayers have

been with Ian, her husband, who is himself suffering from a serious illness, and Heather, her daughter. Sue had a great pastoral concern for many people but especially for the Followers who had bonded together. She was often on the phone expressing her love and concern. Behind her concern was her prayer life. In the face of many difficulties in life, not least her own health, she showed no self-pity but in dark days clung to the God she loved. She was a tower of strength to her family. No doubt, she is still praying for us all in heaven.

We had to look seriously at the Followers of the Lamb, whether we would eventually let them disband, or whether we should bring new life into the group. We chose the latter. We are delighted that in November four new Followers will make their commitment to serve the Lord, alongside us. There will be two new Brother Followers and two new Sister Followers of the Lamb in the little band, all of whom are working closely alongside us already. We always say that a community that is alive and open to the will of God will be like a stream whose essence remains the same, but outwardly is constantly changing.

We were unexpectedly forced to change our bank when it brought in bank charges that would seriously affect us. We are in the process of changing to the CAF Bank, which was formed to help charities. It is a long process and the end is still not in sight. We are facing each hurdle as it arises with prayer, and telephone calls to the CAF bank. It is our former bank that is dragging its feet. We would like to thank all those who we had to contact, who have responded to our letter. If you need our new bank details because you are giving to us regularly, and have not received a letter from Sister Marie, could you contact her, as it is possible that we do not have your correct address? If you have received the letter and not acted on it, time is now running out.

Perhaps this is also the point at which we remind any who Gift Aid with us, to advise us if you no longer pay income tax. The threshold for tax has changed several times, and may well change in the future, so it does need constant awareness.

We were affected in a personal way by the Brexit vote as one of our Sisters is a Swiss national. Along with countless others, we are now applying for a certificate of right to permanent residence in the UK for her. We had not realised that such a certificate existed and only discovered it when we began investigating citizenship. Both the change of bank and this have caused many hours of extra work, as well as visits to our solicitor. The form alone, when we downloaded it, was 86 pages in length! She is now without her Swiss passport, as this has had to be surrendered for identity purposes. The day after the referendum, we were advised to act now while everything is still in a state of flux. We were providentially visiting our solicitor that day about our change of bank. No-one knows what the future will hold, or what changes there could be in the law.

We are still hoping that there will be a new book published by Christmas. It is finished but small corrections have to be made and half-way through this, we have come to a halt because other matters became more urgent, including this newsletter! We trust the Lord. If it is his will, the book will be fully completed to the timetable we had in mind and if not, then we will accept the delay.



Many of you have met and loved our dog, Thomas. You will be sad to read that he died recently, after a short illness. We were, of course, heart-broken. It was unexpected and happened so quickly. The phrase we keep hearing is, that he was 'a lovely dog'. He was indeed. The house and garden are very empty without him.

So with us too, there have been changes and there will be more to come. Some have been joyful, some sad and others brought unexpected extra work. Every morning we read an extract from our Rule of Life when we meet together as a community. This morning's seemed peculiarly apt and pertinent for this almost-completed newsletter. "There are no blueprints or certainties about the future. Trust in the Holy Spirit's guidance and wisdom."

Alongside these, there are constants – the beauty of each season, food to eat, a roof over our heads, the love of those we hold dear and above all the love of the Lord Jesus.

May the Lord bless you on your pilgrimage
With all its changing scenes.
You do not journey, as those without faith.
May he protect you from all fear and despair.
Travel on, in the strength of the Lord
And the peace he gives.

Your Sisters and Brothers at Redacre