

# Sisters of Jesus Way

## Summer 17

Our dear friends,

We hope that this letter finds you enjoying just such a summer morning as we have here today. The estuary is a hazy turquoise and a few white clouds gently move across a delicate blue sky. The garden is full of rich colours, roses, golden marigolds, sweet peas, and nasturtiums. We are beginning to harvest lettuce, radish and rhubarb with the promise of apples, pears, plums, figs, soft fruit, cucumber and tomatoes to come. Since last summer, we have been able to place more sturdy benches in quiet spots in our garden. We emphasise, 'sturdy', as one of our older, less robust seats collapsed under a Sister and another one under a visitor. We promise that won't happen with these!



We have been pleased to welcome many visitors, some of whom we have not met before. It is a particular joy when we greet a guest whom we have not seen for years. They remember that here is a place of peace and the presence of the Lord. We are impressed by the sacrificial work for the Lord that many of you have undertaken. It is a huge privilege for us to be able to provide shelter for a short time when needed - away from the battle, so to speak. Some of us are content with a shallow Christianity that never brings us into conflict. If we truly love Jesus and love others, because he commanded that we do, it is costly. Loving always is. The poor are still with us, not only in impoverished areas, but amongst the rich, too. All are poor who do not know the love of God. How will they know his love unless they see his gentleness, compassion and kindness in us?

To return to the happenings here! Zoe has now become a Sister taking the name, 'Sister Zoe of Jesus, the Wellspring of Life'. It is always a deeply moving moment when, early in the morning, we gather in our chapel. The blue dress is draped across the altar and we dedicate it to the Lord. Later in the day, it is worn by the new Sister and she makes her promises during a service in our chapel. Bishop Peter joined us, as did Zoe's family and friends. It is, of course, only the beginning of a long road before final promises are taken.

An Anglican minister commented firmly to one of us recently, "You are upheld in prayer". We are often conscious of our own fragility, an ever-expanding work and the limits of our strength. Some people put us on a pedestal but we are just like other folk, with weaknesses and faults. God is with us and we are 'upheld by prayer', and are truly grateful. We were glad to participate in the Archbishop of Canterbury's initiative when he called us to ten days of intercessory prayer leading up to Pentecost. We shared this time of intercession with our visitors in our morning prayers. A number of mornings there was a tangible sense of the Holy Spirit filling our chapel as we prayed together. It was often in the quietness that the Lord came to us. In evangelical circles we are quite good at making a joyful noise to the Lord but not quite so good at being silent before him. We have been in services where there have been fervent prayers for the Holy Spirit but before he has time to descend on the congregation the service moves on to the next item! Let us hasten to say, we also have been guilty in this regard. The old Pentecostals used to have what they called 'Tarrying Meetings', taken from the words of Jesus to the apostles to tarry in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them. We don't know whether this is still the practise in Pentecostal circles.

A number of us were also helped by the written prayer we used during the ten days. It was full of love, saying how precious to God were those for whom we were interceding and asking Jesus to break into their lives with his love, grace and peace. Sometimes we undo our own intercession, before we begin, because we are praying judgementally. It is easy to want someone to meet with

Jesus because we are finding them difficult! Very subtly, the prayer actually has me at the centre, not the person for whom we are praying! The heart of God is all love. If our intercessory prayers are not grounded in love then they are merely words. Praying for others need not be only at specific times – we can pray as we walk along the road, sit on a bus or wash the dishes!

Some of you have prayed about Beatrice's right to remain in this country. We have been thankful for those prayers. There was a long form to complete. Our main concern was a question on finance. The government is anxious that anyone allowed to remain here does not become a liability to the UK in the future by claiming benefit. We live according to the Lord's finances and he has never failed us, and never will, but it is quite difficult explaining that to the Home Office! We were hugely relieved when, after many months, Beatrice's passport was returned with a simple piece of pink card which stated she had the right to remain in the UK. There was also a note inside suggesting that she apply for citizenship. We are doing just that. The first step is an English conversation test and we have no doubt about her ability there. After that, there will be the forms with similar, difficult questions because we don't quite fit the mould. So please keep praying for us. It reminds us of the early days of community when a number of well-meaning friends kept urging us to be more business-like. We shudder to think what would have happened if we had followed their advice. It was a Roman Catholic priest, who was also a Brother in a community, who said to us that you cannot rely on Providence too much. We have proved the truth of his words but it is difficult to explain this to officialdom! With God nothing is impossible, even that!

This leads us on to our other piece of news. At last, our second book is now published and available. Boxes and boxes of books arrived here and were stowed away wherever we could find a space. The title is, 'Precious in His Sight'. It is the story of the Heavenly Father's love for his children. We, "tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us." Isaiah 63:7. For the first time, in book form we tell many of the stories we have related to our guests over the years. It amazes us, looking back as we do now, the way in which we have been led, protected and provided for. We were not promised an easy path as Christians but it is a safe path sheltered in his love. In places, we have stumbled and made mistakes. There have been times we have been humbled. We have endeavoured to share our journey with its highs and lows, its joys and its sorrows.

We are delighted to have been able to include forty coloured pictures interspersed into the text. This has been skilfully accomplished. We are praying that this book will be used by the Lord to bring glory to him, to encourage other Christians on the path to which the Lord has called them and to open the eyes of some who read it to the wonders of the Kingdom of God.

We do not want to take up too much space writing about our dog so just a few sentences as so many of you enquire how our rough haired collie, rescued from death row in Croatia, is progressing. He had been thrown from a train, caught by a dog-catcher and that was the end of the road seemingly for him. He was only two years old. He was rescued by an animal charity, Action Aid for Animals. He is now calmer and mostly obedient! Many of his fears are falling away. He is very affectionate and even the cat and he managed a tentative, nose to nose, kiss this week. He snuggles up to the chapel door and joins in with much of the singing during our prayers. He doesn't always hit the note but he tries. We know that there is still a long road ahead. We were warned by the vet that it would be three years before it was safe to let him off the lead outside – if frightened he would bolt. We are very encouraged by how far he has come.

All of us will have been affected by the tragedies the country has suffered these last weeks. Add to that an unstable government and everything seems very insecure indeed. We feel that some of the press have been unnecessarily vitriolic. Perhaps we should watch our speaking and not be dragged along by journalists. Other times, the press has been sensitive and compassionate and who would not be, when we read about the victims of terrorism and fire and their grieving families and friends.

Looking beyond the UK, the suffering in the Middle East is unrelenting, from children being shot as they try to escape Mosul, to a busload of Coptic Christians, mainly women and children, being blown up by IS in Egypt. We really plead for you to pray for North Korea with the indescribable conditions in the vast labour camps. It is the compassion of Christ in our hearts that drives us to prayer. Instead of just watching the news, or reading about it, and then quite literally switching off, we are called as Christians to pray. This is all most of us can do, apart from giving, but prayer is everything.

We have touched on a number of subjects in this letter but there are two common threads to which we have kept returning: one is prayer, especially intercessory prayer, and the other is love and compassion. This is a calling for all of us. May the Lord give us the grace to answer his call and live as Christ in the world.



“I will hold the Christ-light for you  
In the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
Speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;  
When you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
Till we've seen this journey through.”

Richard Gillard

Our love in the Lord Jesus,

Sisters of Jesus Way.

Sisters of Jesus Way, Redacre, 24 Abbey Road, West Kirby, Wirral, CH48 7EP.

Tel No. 0151 625 8775. E-mail: [sistersofjesusway@redacre.org.uk](mailto:sistersofjesusway@redacre.org.uk)

Website: [www.redacre.org.uk](http://www.redacre.org.uk)

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