

Sisters of Jesus Way Summer Newsletter 05



Our dear friends,

The summer months have burst into fruitfulness, an abundance of raspberries, gooseberries safely topped, tailed and made into jam, blackcurrants in the freezer. Very special this year, a cherry tree that was given to us and found a home against the kitchen wall provided us with black juicy fruit. Now as the autumn approaches we look forward to tomatoes, apples, pears and plums.

We are blessed here with the rhythm of the seasons and the rhythm of the tides in the estuary. We realise both of these many of you are unable to experience. But God is there in the city streets and the supermarket too, in the faces of the shoppers for whom this trip out helps to assuage their loneliness, the frantic with not enough time, the impatient glancing at their watches and inwardly fuming at every small delay or the weary cashier at the end of her shift.

Despite our garden produce, we too have to shop! Some of the sisters enjoy a visit to a supermarket and others find their enjoyment of shopping quite incomprehensible! One thing is the same for you and us. We are the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ there. This does not necessarily mean overtly dishing out texts although a little word of encouragement in our pocket based on Scripture can be very helpful sometimes, as we have discovered. We have seen worn and tired faces light up as they read a carefully chosen word. We portray Christ by who we are, a smile, a kind word, patience and an inner peace because we are close to God and not at war with ourselves. One of the sad aspects of Christianity, as so often lived, is that we have become indistinguishable from those around us, not only because of what we do but also because of who we are.

As well as the rhythms of the seasons and tides, there is another rhythm with which we are blessed, the rhythm of prayer. This you can share with us. When we go to the shops or wherever, or begin our daily work, we have already spent time in prayer. This is undoubtedly easier in community. There is strength and encouragement when we come together to worship and pray. Prayer is necessary for all of us not only for our own edification (we sometimes wonder how Christianity has become so egocentric and individualistic today) but also for the sake of others, for example those we meet in the Supermarket.

Many of you have stayed with us. Perhaps, it would be helpful for you to join us in prayer wherever you are at 8.00 a.m. every morning and then again turn to God with us at 7 p.m. every evening. Essentially, our morning prayer is praise and thanksgiving, listening to God's word in Scripture and intercession. Our evening prayer is also thanksgiving but it includes confession and forgiveness, intercession and yielding ourselves to the Lord. A gentle turning to God wherever you are and whatever you are doing may be all that is possible. On the other hand you may be able to spend a longer time in prayer.

Even turning our mind quietly to the Lord in the midst of whatever we have to do at that moment will in time begin to change us. Most important of all, it will begin to establish a rhythm of prayer. If you join with us you will know that you are not praying alone. This gives strength and encouragement. It is like a little prop.

Satan will do everything that he can to stop us praying. He often finds an ally in our lack of discipline and our ability to crowd our minds with everything and anything but God. The vague thought at the beginning of the day that we would somehow find a minute or two sometime in the day to pray usually ends up at the end of the day being another day where the minute or two didn't happen.

We may change in an instant at our conversion and to that many of us can testify but after that it is more like the drip of water wearing away stone as the love of God softens our hearts and makes us more like His Son. The turning of our mind to God in prayer by a conscious act of the will is our part. We then find that God begins to engage with our hearts. It is then easier to remain open to him the whole day! Then we will notice the faces in the

crowd and those familiar faces around us with the eyes of Christ. We will be given compassion. In turn those around us will begin to see the love of God in us.

Even the word evangelism has often become tarnished because sometimes there has been hardness; the loving compassion of the Lord Jesus has been missing. We have a friend who speaks of Christ in the most unlikely places, recently after a performance at a theatre, in a bookshop and often on trains. His secret is that he is obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and he offers friendship, the fruit of Christian love. There is a response. This is unlikely to happen unless there is some fixed point of prayer in our lives giving us a growing awareness of God. It is love that counts and this is a gift from God.

A life of prayer has to begin somewhere. Perhaps for some of you a link with us would be helpful. It is not easy to be a Christian on your own. The Lord never intended that we should be. We are one family in Him. We too would be greatly encouraged to know that you were turning to God with us however briefly at those times. We know that it delights the heart of the heavenly Father when his children pray! We also know that we need to pray.

But a word of warning! There is a difference between legalism and self-discipline. If you should decide that it would be helpful for you to turn your thoughts towards God at set times, it is best done gently and calmly. This is self-discipline. If you suddenly remember that you have forgotten both 8.00 a.m. and 7 p.m. then and there turn again to the Lord. We don't grow by reproaching ourselves but rather by encouragement. Think of a small child in front of you. That is what we are to the heavenly Father. A child does not grow by harshness, accusations and reproach or the sinking feeling, "failed again"! That is legalism. We are his little ones. He loves us!

Similarly there may be times when we cannot pray for one reason or another at a time that we have set apart and cannot turn our thoughts even momentarily to the Lord. There are some situations where it is impossible to have your mind on two things at once! Legalism condemns but grace allows us to be free. If however, days or even weeks pass without prayer then we should question both our self-discipline and our love for the Lord. Prayer in the end is just that, a love relationship with God.

May God bless you and unite us in prayer,

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