

Sisters of Jesus Way

Summer Newsletter 2014

Our dear friends,

Thank you for all your loving help in so many ways since we wrote our last letter. Your prayers encourage us and we are humbled by the number of people who pray for us. Thank you too for your other gifts which sometimes come in unexpected ways. This afternoon two large plates of sandwiches arrived! A friend goes bargain hunting when the supermarket reduces its prices and then arrives here triumphantly with the booty! We have been overwhelmed by the books (many of them excellent) given to us for the library. Our librarian, because of family circumstances, could not come. Another friend stepped in. Christine, our friend and a Follower of the Lamb, who works with us, was diagnosed with a serious illness about six months ago. It was difficult to see our way through without her but one of our other Followers and her husband doubled the time they could give us and stepped into the breach. We are so grateful. Christine (for those who know her) has responded well to treatment.



Our Quiet Room has been made more comfortable by a gift of easy chairs and a settee. The ramp has been finished and looks as if it has been there forever. It is well used, much more than anticipated. It is an easier way to the chapel and garden than the steps for any who are having difficulties with mobility. It is also quite popular with some who, as far as we can see, are quite agile. Hanging baskets and pots of flowers have made it attractive this summer. Finally, we are grateful to the Lord that we have been able to update our offices. We have been able to replace our aging computers this year. They have given us good service but this year began to show their age - one was 14 years old. When Windows issued a statement saying that they would no longer supply updates for XP, their fate was sealed.

We have been promising new floor covering upstairs and down in Redacre corridors for some time. Those who have eyes to see know that this is necessary! We took a step in the right direction recently when, during days that we were closed for community, all the doors and skirting were painted. We will have to wait until our next closed days, which will be in September, before we can go ahead. In the meanwhile, there will be difficult decisions about which carpet upstairs. It definitely has to be good quality to last. Downstairs we need something we can sweep, but what? We are open to any helpful suggestions, especially for the latter.

We write this every year, but our garden has looked so beautiful. We put this in the past tense, as the rain has rather battered the roses, but they will recover. We are beginning to eat our own produce although it is a continual battle with the wood pigeons. How do gooseberry bushes full of unripe fruit and potential become a wasteland overnight? Actually there were eight gooseberries left! The culprit was discovered, soon after, having sneaked his way through the netting again. This time he was about to feast on our blackcurrants. However he had overstepped the mark and was entangled. Being compassionate, a sister went to the rescue!

Many of you ask about S. Lynda's grandmother. We all went to her 104th birthday party in June. She was bright and alert and seemed to enjoy every minute, instantly recognising those who had been invited. We can't quite imagine life without her.

We are delighted at the way our book, "To Love You Only", has been read by so many people and we have had some good comments about it. We have lost count of the number of countries to which copies have made their way, far beyond Europe. Likewise our CD has travelled far. The book can now be obtained from the Christian Bookshop in Birkenhead and for those of our friends in the North, from the CLC bookshop in Newcastle upon Tyne, as well as from the Sisters.

St Mary's, the church we attend, invited us to take part in "Sundays at Seven". Once a month someone tells their story of faith, adventuring with God, or Christian social concern. It is done very professionally and gathers in members of other churches, as well as folk from the four St. Mary's congregations. A few of us arrived at the church suffering severely from nerves! The sympathy and love from others was tangible. Some Sisters and our Brother sang and played guitars, a Sister

danced and a few Sisters were interviewed. It was videoed and can be seen on St Mary's website, www.stm-upton.org.uk

We have always been grateful that in the early days of our community we were taught to go the way of the Lamb, that is, taking as our example, Jesus. "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."¹ We have never been in a situation where threats, insults, suffering and death are facing us but there are many Christians in the world who are. We are humbled when we read of their meekness and courage in the face of persecution, refusing to retaliate and making no threats. The Lord is calling us to pray for them and help in whatever way we can. In our own lesser situations he is calling us to walk the same path. "Blessed are the meek",² Jesus said.

Meekness is not to be confused with weakness. There is nothing weak about Jesus, St Paul, or the Christians in the persecuted church. Meekness is associated with gentleness, humility, concern for others and patience. It is the image of God, for Jesus described himself as, "Gentle and humble in heart."¹ Only the Lord can remake us into his image. It is not within our nature to be meek. We are not encouraged by the prevailing culture to be meek. It is quite the contrary. Everything is against us following this path.

We have the choice, either the way of Jesus or the way of the world. They are mutually exclusive. Meekness begins not by us trying to make ourselves humble. This is disastrous. It begins when we live our lives humbly obedient to God. There have been a number of situations for us when a big banner came to the front of our minds with large capital letters saying, "Walk the way of the Lamb". We have done so and the Lord has wonderfully rescued us and sometimes vindicated us. This is not to say that we have run from a situation but he has enabled us to speak gently and calmly, without retaliating. Of course there have been other situations when we have failed completely but we have learnt from them. It really is the devil when we are tempted to give someone, as we would say, "a piece of our mind". Of course, there are times when we have to speak the truth in a situation and sometimes we fail to do that because of cowardice. It is how we do it that matters. If our attitude is right, the Lord will give us the words and we will love even those who accuse us. That is truly going the way of Jesus.

Social media presents its own temptation. To start a tit-for-tat conversation and even worse, an exchange that cannot be erased, is not only to be lacking in meekness but also in wisdom. Always wanting the last word is also a sign of self-assertiveness that is the opposite of humility. For those of us who are articulate it is a long, hard road to be obedient to Jesus and allow others the last word. This is the road to which Christ calls us. Meekness is happy to be a servant, does not seek status, isn't stubborn and self-willed.

We are quite happy to acknowledge in prayer in a church service that we are sinners and perhaps allow some of the previous week's failings to float through our minds, but most of us would find it difficult if someone else told us the same truth, especially naming these failings! Of course, we might argue, it depends on how it is said to us, as it is even more difficult to deal with if the person says it aggressively. The truly humble and meek person would respond with a smile and

agree with what had been said! The saintly Jean Vianney, the priest of Ars, was given a round robin letter, presumably by mistake. In it all his faults, real and imaginary, were listed. He read the contents and then cheerfully added his own name. How many of us could have done that?

To truly live the Christian life is much more effective in evangelism than many words. This is not to say that we do not speak about Jesus, or a person's need of him, but if within minutes we are irritated or impatient, standing on our rights, domineering or manipulative, it will undermine anything that we have said. St Paul wrote, "Let your gentleness be evident to all."⁴ As Christians, we are different, and gentleness, patience and meekness are some of the marks of Christ in our lives.

There is a beautiful old service for the ordination of deaconesses in the Methodist Church, which is no longer used. A prayer in it speaks of, "A mind too happy to take offence or harbour resentment".⁵ That is the secret. Our happiness is in Jesus, the Beloved, so we walk his way, the way of the Lamb.

May the Lord bless you these long summer days. May you be renewed in body, mind and spirit and refreshed by the Lord Jesus.

The Sisters of Jesus Way and Brother of the Way

¹ 1 Peter 2:23 NIV

² Matthew 5:5 NIV

³ Matthew 11:29 NIV

⁴ Phil 4:5 NIV

⁵ The Book of Offices 1936

¹ Matthew 11:29