

SISTERS OF JESUS WAY

Summer Newsletter 06

Our dear friends,

As the old chorus goes, “God’s love is very wonderful.” We see it in our friends, we see it in Scripture and we see it in creation. In the spring we suspected that a female mallard had a nest somewhere in the vicinity of our garden as the male stood guard like a sentinel hour upon hour on the fence between our ponds. Sometimes as night descended he could be seen statue-like surveying the land from the ridge of our neighbour’s roof. His patience was infinite and so was his courage as marauders from the park lake swept in with the dawn. Fleeting the female came to feed in our pond.

One Sunday as we were eating our lunch, the doorbell rang. We were in Bethany and answered via the intercom. A lady informed us that there was a duck in our front drive with ten chicks. We opened the garden gate and the little procession came down the path, negotiated the waterfall and landed in our pond. Eight admirers crowded around the pond and from that moment they became “our chicks”. They were delightful; little balls of fluff from which protruded a tiny head and two spindly legs. It was a sunny day and they scrambled out of the water onto a small rock, snuggling close together and to their mother. Space was at a premium. Ten is rather a large family and the last one out kept sliding down the smooth stone back into the pond! He didn’t give up! Perhaps it was then that we saw for the first time the care that the female takes with her chicks. She noticed and moved slightly until there was room for all. Her care for her little ones was touching to watch and reminded us of the watchfulness of God with us. “The Lord watches over you,” wrote the psalmist. ⁱ



After a rest she marched the ten fluffy yellow and brown chicks around the garden, strengthening their little legs and reconnoitering her route for the next day. Night came and she settled by the side of the pond with all ten under her wings ready to die for them if they were attacked. Not one little head or tail could be seen. Secure under her wings they rested. It was impossible not to think of Jesus as he wept over Jerusalem. “How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”ⁱⁱ There are many verses in Scripture about the shelter of God’s wings. “How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings.”ⁱⁱⁱ “I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.”^{iv}

The male duck settled on the path beside them. The chicks were contented and secure but we were worried as we have foxes passing through our garden. We beseeched the heavenly Father that night to protect them from harm. Great was our relief the next day on waking to see the ten bundles of fluff energetically swimming in the pond with the female beside them.

Later that morning the long march for the chicks began. The mother set off along the Praise Path with the ten chicks close behind her. Unhesitatingly she led them next door through a small gap. Some garden rubbish then enabled them to negotiate the wall and over they went. She chose the place where it is terraced but nevertheless to a tiny chick each descent must have seemed like falling over a cliff. They landed much to the surprise of those who live beneath us outside their back door; all, that is, except one unfortunate who landed in the wrong garden. The female knew one was lost. Great was the quacking and chirping until a little figure speeded under the hedge to rejoin them. We mustn’t press a simile too far but sometimes we wander and land somewhere we shouldn’t be. There is a Father heart of love that yearns for us. Jesus came to seek the lost. Great is the rejoicing in heaven when that one is found.

Our neighbour opened the garden gate and the little procession passed through, down their front path, across a road and down the street opposite. She walked them across another road and into the park. There was still quite a way to go across the park but the little ones kept up, as she didn’t slacken her pace. We have a picture of them a few yards from the lake, the mother with her long neck stretched towards the water anticipating with eagerness the journey’s end and the chicks close behind her, all ten safely home. Perseverance is a great quality and we all need it.

Almost everyday one of us went down to see them, all ten chicks survived. The fluffy down gave way to feathers as they matured. We didn’t witness their first flight but next spring when the mallards fly high overhead or skid to a halt as they splash down in our ponds we will be wondering if it is one of our chicks come back.

“Those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;”^v or like our mallards!

Our love and prayers,

The Sisters of Jesus Way

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- i Psalm 121:5
 - ii Luke 13:34
 - iii Psalm 36:7
 - iv Psalm 57: 1
 - v Isaiah 40:31
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