



Fiat

Dear Friends,

For all of us I guess it has been a funny sort of year, still is.

I have received some lovely cards and it is so good to hear from people. I used to get my letter done early and I no longer can, but there are advantages in that!

A big thing this year for us was the number of people who came exploring our life, made possible by the fact we were closed to guests and only took those who had quarantined for 14 days, so it had to be worth staying. One or two remarks from those who found the life was not at all what they anticipated.

'I have never worked so hard in my life.'

'I used to be nice before I came into community.'

But also 'It is so lovely here I don't understand why anyone wouldn't want to stay.'

At present we have two novices but none of the summer swallows stayed. However it has been fascinating for us getting to see such different people at more depth than is usual. And a fascinating time for them, very rich. So good altogether.

Another main change has been in the garden. In view of Britain's poor record, losing more biodiversity than almost anywhere else the G7 group, this little community with an inspiring new gardener is doing its bit to put back some habitat. That means planting lots of trees, turning old wood into bee hotels and the like, making wetlands and letting the gardens grow wild a bit.

My own life plods on much the same. I did actually manage to get away in November, entirely with communities, and more or less testing daily, but it was a rich time, and lots of pleasure too. It started with an invitation to a life profession at Quidenham, exciting indeed. I met the Sister concerned first at Wantage, and travelled to East Anglia with another Sister I met at Wantage, now the Leader of All Saints. It made all the difference in the world to have a much loved travelling companion, and nuns everywhere are busy these days, as are most people, so we never usually have time to chat. It was wonderful. Quidenham is in the middle of nowhere so we stayed with CAH Sisters

in Bungay where they have made a lovely place and are living the life although not in their big convent. Great to see them so happy.

After that a week and a half staying at All Saints in Oxford where they poured in love and hospitality, and during that time I had an eight day retreat with a Sister from Sisters of the Love of God, preceded by a tour round their beautiful renovated convent with the brilliant idea of joining up all the wings with a large and stunning cloister so everyone can get everywhere on the flat.

I painted a bit, retreats being the only time I can; here is one, the meaning is known to me!



The rest of the time I plod on, as one does, aware of the distress of others, and also with two daughters who have their own issues, living abroad. They do well, are kind, thoughtful and creative, both working. In fact although we live up a Welsh hillside in the middle of nowhere, I find my heart is full of the joys as well as sorrows of others. But they have their own stories and I don't tell them for them.

We are tentatively open but only to a very small number of visitors, restricted by Welsh hospitality rules, but as I at least continue to struggle with the work generated by the kitchen, it is enough. On the whole it's resident visitors who get to chapel, and then masked and at the back. Personally I am embarrassed by the lack of hospitality but those few who come, seem quite happy with the restrictions. Who knows what the winter will bring – lots more Covid. And I have already cancelled guests alas. But also lots more stories of courage and compassion. Most people are very gracious. We aren't in control, that's for sure. We know ourselves incredibly lucky to be able to continue worship. You can just see little origami cranes on the stalls, the picture at the end was taken before we opened, as we ourselves have now moved out of the block facing the altar to make room for the two guests (with three days in between.) Each crane has the names of two of our 'family' (oblates, associates and companions) on it for prayer.

Whilst Covid has dominated the world, yet not always. I am fortunate to get fascinating letters from Madagascar, where there are extraordinary issues but Covid isn't really one of them! Whereas for so many I know it means being unable to see one's loved ones in hospital, to have memorials and so much trauma. Chloe (7) is affected of course, and normal – so



Sr Katharine remains completely dedicated to enabling this little community to grow in depth – possibly in numbers but numbers just do go up and down. A picture taken in May this year showed three novices and five professed Sisters, one taken in 2014 showed three in the noviciate and five professed Sisters; but with a good deal of coming and going in between. And during the comings and goings one learns to live with another set of people, another set of values, another set of emotions, and we live closely together – the pressure cooker being an oft used image! At one point we had five young women in their twenties here, dynamic, exciting, enriching and exhausting! (I have got old) Now one of those, Sister Joanna, has made her Profession. Very beautiful.

So here we are, all in our own ways trying to say, 'Fiat, let it be to me according to thy Word.' And here it means in this particular place with these particular people.

Love to all as you give (or don't) your assent in your own place. Elizabeth/Lizzie

