

A letter from Jean



Since November 10, I have been back in my little house next to La Ferme, by the L'Arche community chapel in Trosly. I admit that I am happy, my life is quiet and physically I am well, despite great tiredness. As my heart remains weak, I am waiting for it to grow stronger. Odile Ceyrac and Christine McGrievy, the leader of my L'Arche community in Trosly, have been very supportive of me and they continue to watch over me during this period of recovery which has been extended until the end of February.

I spend my mornings in my room on the first floor resting, praying and reading. I derive a lot of joy in contemplating the birds through my window. A big crow often takes up position at the top of the tree not far from the house. He watches everything with a very preoccupied air. He is like a gang leader! Some other smaller birds swirl to the right and left at top speed. And some tiny little birds also sit in the tree. They are called kinglets and they are magnificent. There are also some chickadees and then flocks of sparrows that seem to travel in groups of twelve. Still others come and go, like these little turtledoves. Just imagine that yesterday I even saw two birds that seemed to be wearing a red hat. They looked like clowns. I do not know what they were doing but most of the time they looked so funny. And in early January in Trosly, daisies are beginning to appear in my little garden! Is this a sign that spring is on the way?

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I have had to cancel all the retreats and conferences that I was due to give at La Ferme and elsewhere. Antony Paoli, the leader of La Ferme, who has also given me a lot of support, has kept up the retreats at La Ferme by calling upon some wonderful people to replace me. The grace of L'Arche and the Gospel continues to be announced and I am very happy about that.



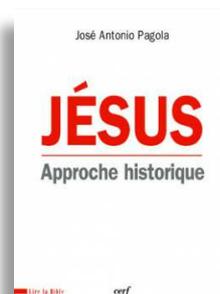
In October, when I was still in the hospital, I felt that a new stage of my life was beginning, a life more given to prayer, silence, reading, solitude and a few meetings. I thought this would be a good ending after a very busy life with L'Arche and Faith and Light. Now I have the impression that it is not an end but a beginning. A beginning of what? Only God knows, and God is full of surprises! So I wait for something new. Each day is a new day to know God better, to love Jesus better and to work for the Kingdom of God and for peace in our poor world.

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I discover that I do not know how to pray, but I have always been told that wanting to pray is already a prayer and I very much desire it. I want to know Jesus better. One day, I asked a contemplative sister how she prayed. She said, "I wait for Jesus!"

So, I wait with a lot of desire, hope and patience; I would like to know him better and be more united to his heart that loves each person. To learn to love as God loves each person in our great human family around the world, each with their wounds, their culture, their suffering, their religion, their expectations, their hopes, their weariness.

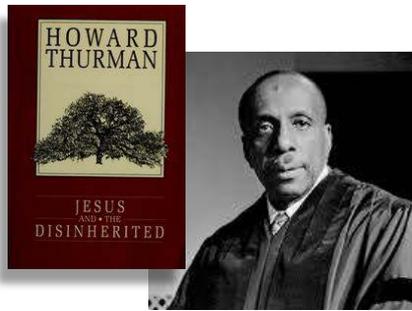
In the meantime, I am reading two books: *Jesus: An Historical Approximation* written by José Antonio Pagola and *Jesus and the Disinherited* by Howard Thurman (in English only).



The first is a theologian and historian of very great breadth, who is very knowledgeable about Israel in the time of Jesus. How did Jesus announce good news to the Galileans when they were being horribly persecuted by the Romans, tyrannized by Herod, battered by the Temple leaders, and abused by rich people who forced them to pay ever greater taxes? Jesus went to these poor people and said to them, "The Kingdom of God is with you!" He transformed them by revealing to them that they were loved by God and that happiness comes from loving each person with tenderness and compassion.

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The second author, Howard Thurman, is a black American pastor, the grandson of a slave. He speaks of his crushed and suffering people. How could they understand and know the religion of the whites who were persecuting them?

So I think of those slaves crushed over and over again and those Galileans to whom Jesus spoke, a world of suffering.

Today there are so many people in pain who are asking themselves: where is God? My prayer goes out to all those people overwhelmed by suffering in a world where there are so many immigrants, refugees, people engulfed in loneliness, or in prison. For all these people, I offer this new stage of my own - rather comfortable - life. May the kingdom of God come! This kingdom of love where each person discovers they are God's beloved, and called to love others.

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At the beginning of the year, we had the pleasure of receiving a visit from Nayla Tabbara who founded Adyan with Father Fadi Daou. Adyan is a centre in Beirut that helps Muslims to know the Christian faith and Christians to know Islam. She came to La Ferme to give us a talk on unity. It was a very beautiful conference. She is a Sunni Muslim, with a huge desire to help Christians and Muslims to know each other better and to discover the value of each one.



I often think of her and all those Muslims and Christians who are working for unity and mutual understanding. There are so many people creating division but fortunately there are others who want to work for dialogue and true encounter.

I had the joy of spending a delightful Christmas dinner with my foyer, le Val Fleuri, where by tradition each year, I set light to the Christmas pudding - which is not always very appreciated in France.



I would like to sing a very big thank you to each and every one of you, my brothers and sisters from our L'Arche and Faith and Light communities and so many other friends who have sent me your Christmas wishes for good health, and for a new year holy and happy.

Thank you, thank you: alas, I cannot answer each one as I would like, but know that each card or letter received is immediately transformed into a moment of communion, friendship and prayer.

Yes, thank you to God for our great family around the world which he has raised up and given us.

*For this new year,
may the God of peace bless us,
and help each one of us
to become an artisan
and messenger of peace.*

*I hold you in my heart
and prayer,
Jean*

