

## **Minister's Letter**



### ***Sister Joyce CSF, Minister General of the First Order Sisters, writes:***

Dear Friends,

Someone once wrote, "Growth means change and change involves risk, stepping from the known to the unknown". We sisters are on the threshold of an historic change. In 1962, when we moved from Dalston, London to Compton Durville, Somerset, because of the post-war rebuilding of East London, little did we realise that another major re-location might be faced by CSF 48 years later. There was not even a prophet amongst us who could have foretold this! In fact going back further in our history to 1909, the move from Hull to Dalston was rather a significant move for the sisters of that time. So now in 2010 we embark on the third major re-location from Compton Durville, Somerset to Metheringham, Lincolnshire.

However there is a significant difference in this re-location. CSF no longer is largely centred in one house. Metheringham, like the present Compton Durville, will be one of seven houses where sisters live and work: five in the United Kingdom, one in South Korea and one in the Province of the Americas. Growth there has been since that move in the sixties, not simply in numbers of sisters, but also growth in the different ministries undertaken by the community members: from a community ministry of nursing the elderly to a variety of individual ministries which has always included offering hospitality in our houses; from an independent Community to an autonomous part of the First Order of the Society of Saint Francis, working interdependently with our brothers and with parallel structures. Within all this growth there has been considerable change and risk, by stepping out in faith from the known to the unknown. This has not always been a straightforward process for it has brought pain as well as joy, curse as well as blessing, darkness as well as light, for this is the very stuff of being human. A significant amount of this growth and change has occurred within my forty years (almost) in CSF.

However this stepping out in faith also involves a dependence on God, which is the very essence of being Christian as well as Franciscan; for Francis, following in the footsteps and teaching of Jesus Christ was central to his understanding of his call from God as written in the Rule for his first brothers, which was essentially some of the crucial sayings of Jesus from the gospels. Perhaps the present situation of CSF might be described in terms of Paul's metaphor of the garden in his First Letter to the Corinthians (with apologies):

Rosina Mary and Helen Elizabeth planted, Agnes Mary and Elizabeth watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the ones who plant nor the ones who water are anything, but only God who gives the growth. So we face this risky future together, as a community, trusting in God's providence and grace.

Recently I saw an exhibition of the sculptures of Lorenzo Quinn in London. One of his works was titled 'What Came First?' I was very struck by the words that inspired this sculpture of two human beings in each half of an egg. In any relationship there may be unanswered questions. The beauty of partnership is to find out answers together. Truthful relationship lasts forever because the answers are always coming and keeping interest alive. And so my prayer is that we may continue to learn to live with the questions as we step out in faith from the known to the unknown and try to discern the answers together.

Peace and all good!  
Joyce CSF