Letter to the editor

What I am learning about You, Jesus

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A year ago, while on a train traveling home from a medical conference, a chance conversation with a man of faith awakened memories. As we chatted across the corridor of the carriage, he commented on my name, and then he spoke of Mary, the Mother of God, and her mother, St. Anne. It was then, somehow, that my heart and mind opened and I remembered them both, realized the meaning of my name, and remembered who I was meant to be. We left the train at the airport and parted ways, yet a loving presence remained with me. During the long flight home, that which I now know to be the grace of a call, led me to know that I needed God; and I asked Him for His help. Back home again in the swing of family and nursing work, I started praying the Rosary each day; within weeks I was opening the little metal gate into the grounds of our local church presbytery and knocking on the door. That is how I returned, with surprise, certainty, and joy, after a 28-year absence, back into the welcoming arms of the Catholic Church. Since then, everyday encounters with others, such as sharing a meal with my family, caring for a patient, speaking with someone on the street, have become sacred, love-filled. Having Jesus in my life does that.

During the time of conversion following that train ride, my faith in the divinity of

Jesus Christ, in Him as my Lord and Savior was at first recalled, and then deepened. Yet it is only in recent months that I began to more fully know Jesus in His humanity. I suppose it has taken this time of intense learning about who He is and, in my first adult year of faith, to become again as a child. As a child now, I am looking around at the world, at Him, and to eternity with wonder and trust; valuing the simple and the small; and fully devoting myself to Mary, who is our Mother too. Through the grace of her being so, her Son has become my loving brother, my friend who accompanies me. It is in this beginning to know Him, of the essential ways He lived His full humanity, and of His glorious divinity, that He is teaching me how to live. That is how I have come to now write this letter to Him.

Dear Jesus, what I am learning about You:

You were born at night, in a cave. You loved Your Father and Mother and earthly father Joseph, and were completely obedient to them. You prayed always to Your Father. You created beautiful, functional furniture and homes that helped people in their daily lives. You were humble, patient, gentle. You loved to share a meal with Your family and friends, and You made it a sacred time. You were funny, quick-witted, capturing the point of truth in the moment. Your humor was never unkind. You read and

fully understood the Scriptures, and Your mind was brilliant. In Your early life, You stayed close by Your family; later, You travelled, for the work of the Father.

Immediately after Your baptism, You heard even more powerfully just how much the Father loved You. You were tempted by all of the things that we are tempted by, yet You never sinned. You loved Your friends and all others: kind and tender to children, women, sick and disabled people, sinners, those looked down upon in society. You experienced grief at the death of a friend; You cried with those who were grieving. You forgave sin, and You healed people. You talked easily to strangers. You were tough: You fasted, rose early, worked hard, never complained about physical discomfort like cold or heat, hunger or tiredness. You walked long distances. You often retreated to be alone to pray. You did not care nor worry about money or possessions. You lived moment-to-moment, day-to-day: perfectly in the moment and yet with a clear consciousness of eternity. Sometimes You were exasperated, because of our obtuseness, our misunderstanding of truth and love. Rarely were You angry, and only when it was right to be angry. Your anger did not hurt others. You always spoke the truth: sometimes simply, in a straightforward, crystal clear, brave way, and at other times through creating and telling abstract, puzzling stories, stories with many pieces. You taught by what You did and said. You knew when to speak and when to be silent. You were deeply loved by many and hated by others, and often misunderstood by most, as now. You challenged people in positions of power, in points of truth and justice. You challenge us all, every day.

You gradually prepared Your disciplines for Your coming suffering, chiding them when they resisted this. You foretold too of the eventual suffering of those who loved You. Towards the end, You suffered

beyond words: physically, to the depths of Your whole being, Your soul. You accepted this completely, for love and because it was the will of the Father. On the Cross, bruised, thirsty, naked, You bled and struggled to breathe. You forgave us. Your last words were to give us to Your Mother, Your Mother to us, and Your Spirit to Your Father. You breathed out, and died. You gave Your whole life for us, that we might have new and eternal life, as the beloved children of our Father.

And then: You raised Yourself to full life, blood flowing and eating fish and bread on a beach with Your brothers. You were physically present and gave them Your peace, exhilarated their faith and prepared them to teach God's kingdom. You promised Your Mother and disciples that You would always be with them; and You ascended to heaven to sit rightly with God, our Father. You saw Your disciples praying with Your Mother, and You poured down Your Holy Spirit, filling them with Your Truth and Love and the courage to speak of You to others. By the Spirit in them, You opened the hearts, eyes and ears of many, and Your Church began and reached out to all the peoples of earth.

You form us. Without You, we can do nothing. Thus You remain with us, wholly present in Your Word, the Eucharist, our hearts. You speak to us softly and surely in our prayer to You. You arm us for the daily battle in our hearts and this world. You heal us when we turn back to You in sorrow for our sin. You arouse us to heal, comfort, and love the people we serve. You are with us in every birth and death, joy and suffering, and all the times in between. You shine brightly from the eyes of those who love You.

Dear Jesus, this is how it is that you can receive my letter, because You are here, now and always.

With love,
Annmarie