

December 5, 2011

In no time at all these few weeks of Advent will transport us to the eve of Christmas. This is precious time, a time of waiting and anticipation, a time to reflect and prepare for the birth of new life, the birth of Mystery itself. It is a time for wonder, a time for hope. Yet the tensions in our world and the struggles and pain in our own lives and in the lives of loved ones and neighbors far and near remind us that the paradox of darkness and light frame this season in a powerful way. We approach the shortest day of the year just three days before Christmas, and on that darkest day, known as winter solstice, the days begin to lengthen. The light returns. There is a seed of light in all darkness. The Christmas story illuminates the darkness of winter with hope and promise. God is with us in darkness, born anew in our lives in the darkest of days. We reflect. We wait. We ponder. If you would like to meditate on the readings for our Liturgies next weekend, they are: Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11; 1Thessalonians 5:16-24 and John 1:6-8, 19-28.

Mass Schedule This Month

Our Mass in **Portland** will be Saturday, **December 10**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. The ramp down to the kitchen (as well as the ramp up to the Sanctuary) is located at the east end of the parking lot. Parking is also available on N. Atlantic (west side of the church) and you may enter through the front doors or the back door facing the parking lot on the west end of the building. Casseroles, vegetable dishes, salads and desserts will be most welcome at our dinner following Mass.

Our Mass in **Eugene** will be Sunday, **December 11**, at **First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd**, at **4:00pm**. Bring your entrees, vegetable dishes, salads and desserts for the potluck following our Liturgy. If you would like to be involved as a lector, Eucharistic minister or musician at this Mass, please contact Kathy or Carol. And if you would like to participate as a singer or musician, please come at 3:00 and join in on the rehearsal.

On Sunday, **December 18**, at **10:30am** we will be celebrating Mass in **Battleground**. The address is 26605 NE 96th Ct. For further information or directions call Helen at 360-687-7475 or email her at umphrey@ipns.com.

On Saturday, **December 24**, we will be celebrating **Christmas Eve Mass in Eugene**, at **9:00pm** at the home of Amanda and Dianne. For directions call or email Amanda at 541-543-7279 or apowell@uoregon.edu. Hot cider and cookies following Mass.

Musicians and Singers

You are invited to **join the choir!** If you like to sing and/or play an instrument, please talk to me or one of the choir members after Mass next weekend. We would love to have you!

Community Meetings in January and February

With the near completion of our IRS application, we move into a new phase of development as a community. New tasks lie before us and new decisions need to be made. In order to move forward with planning and decision-making, we are scheduling

community meetings in **Portland** on Saturday, **January 21**, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm, and in **Eugene**, after Mass, on **February 12**.

The leadership team has done a magnificent job of gathering documents, completing, revising and filing paperwork for our tax exempt status as a religious organization. This process has taken nearly a year of time and energy, with countless hours spent on meticulous details. Now it is up to all members of the community to decide what our next steps should be, as well as when and how to take them. **Please come to the meeting** in your area and be part of this process. The wisdom of Sophia is implanted within each of you. Please come and share it for the greater good of Sophia Christi.

Pastoral Update

The leadership team met by Conference Call last night to put the final touches on our IRS application for tax-exempt status. The paperwork now goes to outside professionals for review to make sure everything is in order. Once we have confirmation from the IRS that it has been received, all contributions to Sophia Christi will be tax-deductible pending recognition of our exemption. I will let you know when we have that confirmation letter in hand. Thank you to members of the leadership team for your months of hard and for bringing us this far!

A pastoral reminder--if you are aware of pastoral needs that aren't being met, or know of concerns deserving attention, please let me know. You have my email address in this mailing, and my phone number is 503-286-3584. Don't hesitate to use either one. I welcome you to contact me anytime for conversation, home visitation, sacraments of reconciliation or anointing, home Masses or other pastoral care needs.

Some History Behind The "New" Roman Missal

As parishes around the country stumble through language changes in the Liturgy imposed by the Vatican on English-speaking countries, I would like to provide a little more background about the process behind the development of this "New" Roman Missal.

The first Sacramentary (collection of all the prayers used at Mass) was hastily created in 1973 after the Second Vatican Council approved a shift from Latin to the vernacular at Liturgies the world over. Recognizing a need to update, refine and perfect some of those early translations, the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), comprised of ten Episcopal Conferences from English-speaking countries, began that painstaking work in 1982.

The translation process took over ten years to complete and was finally finished in 1993. Segment after segment of the book was then reviewed by English-speaking Conferences of Bishops around the world. After lengthy consultations and several re-translations, the new Sacramentary was happily finalized in 1997. The many Conferences of Bishops gave their overwhelming canonical approval to this final translation in 1998 and sent it to the Vatican for ratification. It was rejected.

In March of 2001 the Congregation for Divine Worship issued a document on the translation of liturgical texts, *Liturgiam Authenticam*. It attacked inclusive language by requiring translators to use "sacral vernacular" in their translations, and it warned against using words common to other denominations saying: "Great caution is to be taken to avoid a wording or style that the Catholic faithful would confuse with the manner of speech of non-Catholic ecclesial communities or of other religions, so that such a factor will not cause them confusion or discomfort." With clear intention, this document set itself against the ecumenical spirit of Vatican II and sought to block any movement forward in the inclusion of female pronouns in the language of the Mass.

What you might find interesting is that the 1998 Sacramentary still exists. It can be found online at www.misguidedmissal.com. We will be dipping into that wellspring at times in the months to come. The language, of course (especially the God-language) isn't as inclusive as ours at Sophia Christi. The view of church (ecclesiology) found there, as well as the theological underpinnings of many prayers are still bound by an atonement mindset some will find untenable. Yet there is beauty, flow and poetic nuance that is often refreshing. It well deserves attention and hopefully, someday, will find its way into churches and be used by God's people at prayer.

Food for the St. Andrew Episcopal Food Pantry

Thank you to everyone for continuing to bring food and personal hygiene items for the St. Andrew Episcopal Food Pantry each month. We collected **179 pounds** of food and necessities in November, which may be a record for us! The needs are so great this time of year, as so many remain unemployed or drastically underemployed. Please remember to bring what you can next week. **Look for the basket at the entrance to the sanctuary when you come for Liturgy on Saturday or Sunday, and please be as generous as possible.**

The Church begins a new year each Advent, yet our culture sees this time of Fall's end and Winter's beginning as the winding down of an old and tired year. Beginnings are always imbedded in endings, and endings in beginnings. This great paradox is captured visually in the Chinese symbol of Yin and Yang. Moving toward Christmas, our reading from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians reminds us to rejoice always, pray constantly and give thanks for everything. Give thanks for the year being left behind. Give thanks for Advent's grace unfolding within each heart as the new year begins. Pray for strength, for courage, for wisdom and en-lightenment as Christ's Light re-enters the world this Christmas season. Pray for our community and for Sophia's guidance as we walk together, birthing her vision with every step, carrying her child, saying "yes" and "yes" again to the challenge and privilege of bringing Christ to the world. God is truly with us.

May the Spirit sustain and uplift you, and may the God of peace fill your hearts.

Advent/Christmas blessings to all of you,

Toni