

March 5, 2012

Blessings to all of you as winter edges toward spring,

We began Lent this year at Sophia Christi with our first Ash Wednesday service, and we hope to continue this practice into the future. The church calls us to prayer, fasting and almsgiving during this season and we are led to burrow beneath the surface of ordinary life where the seeds of truth often lie dormant. We pull on our boots and go out to the soggy, rain-soaked yard we've mostly neglected through the icy months of winter. There we begin pulling out the broken twigs and dead stalks of the year gone by. With God beside us (prayer), we tend the soil of the special plot we've been given. Hoes, shovels and clippers in hand, we remove everything that stands in the way (fasting) of new plantings, new growth, of life seeking to rise from the belly of our being. Then we take seeds from their packets, place them in the soil, plant the primroses, put bulbs in the ground (almsgiving). We continue praying, tending, noticing, trimming, giving our time and resources to the garden as we wait for its buds to form, its fruit to appear. We do all this with faith, with love, in trust. It is a season of reflection, activity and preparation for spring. It is, by extension, the season in which we are called to put more attention into prayer, into letting go of whatever hinders growth, and getting rid of those barriers we've placed between the "seeds" we are and the nurturing soil of God's love that surrounds us. By doing these things we open and clear the channels of our hearts and spirits so God's life can surge through us as a generous offering for the life of the world at Easter and in all the days beyond. If you would like to meditate on the readings for next Sunday they are: Ex 20:1-3,7-9,12-17; 1 Cor 1:22-25; and Jn 2:13-25.

Mass Schedule This Month

Our Mass in **Portland** will be Saturday, **March 10**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. In keeping with our Lenten tradition, please consider bringing soups and salads for the potluck after Mass. Desserts will reappear at our Easter celebration in April! Remember also that choir rehearsal begins at 4:00 and all interested singers and musicians are invited to come and participate.

Our Mass in **Eugene** will be Sunday, **March 11**, at **First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd**, at **4:00pm**. We will continue the Lenten tradition of soup and salad at our dinner after Mass, leaving desserts behind until Easter. If interested in being part of the choir as a singer or musician, please come at 3:00 and join the rehearsal.

On Sunday, **March 25**, at **10:30am** we will celebrate 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@jpns.com.

Pastoral Update

We have made wonderful progress on some of the dreams and goals we set as a community three years ago. Members of the parish council (formerly known as the leadership team) provided updates for those who came to the **community meetings** in January (Portland) and February (Eugene). Our application for tax-exempt status was submitted to the IRS in the final days of 2011 and now we simply wait. The IRS may ask further questions, which is the initial response most often, we're told, or the department may just send a letter letting us know we have officially achieved 501(c)3 status! That is less likely, but certainly is possible. We can probably expect to hear something by next month.

In the meantime we have word that **contributions to Sophia Christi will be retroactively tax deductible for all of 2012**. This means that contributions you have already made this year will count toward tax liability when you file your tax return next year. This is exciting news for us! To take advantage of this new benefit simply write a check made out to **Sophia Christi**, or use the envelopes provided at the rear of the church if making a cash donation. Feel free to take a couple of these envelopes home with you if you'd like. To be credited with the donation simply put your name and the date on the envelope and drop it in the basket. At the end of the year your contributions will be tallied and you will receive a statement to use when filing your return.

Our host churches, First Congregational in Eugene and Northminster in Portland, had each asked us to secure our own **liability insurance** as a "condition" of using their facilities. Both have been extraordinarily patient as we made our way through the mental processes and legal loopholes of becoming a not-for-profit "corporation." In order to be eligible for an insurance policy we first needed to become an actual legal entity. This is the world we live in, of course, so having become a non-profit in the State of Oregon and having filed for tax-exempt status with the IRS we finally had our "grown up credentials" so that an insurance company could write a policy for us. We are expecting to receive that policy in the mail any day now!

Another of our early goals was the creation of a **website** so that people searching for us could find us on the internet. Twice now I've heard from people who thought we were still meeting at University Park United Methodist Church here in Portland. When they arrived on the second Saturday at 5pm, though, we were nowhere to be seen! Hopefully that will never happen again, because we now have a presence on the web! We are only getting started, so there isn't much there yet, but this will eventually become a valuable communication tool for members of Sophia Christi as well as a means of outreach to the wider Portland and Eugene communities. Take time to check out the website at www.sophiachristi.org. And give us your feedback, suggestions, requests, ideas, photos if you have them and expertise.

Since, early on, we discerned that a major part of **our mission** as a community was to reach out to the disenfranchised, alienated and marginalized members of the Body of Christ. Finding a way to let people know we're here is essential to our mission. The website will help in this effort but more publicity is needed. Anyone interested in working with our Parish Council secretary, Judith Manning, as part of a **communications team**? Please let us know.

At the community meetings we also discussed Sophia Christi's **budget**. The IRS application required us to come up with a budgetary guess for years 2012, 2013 and 2014. In building the community some things--like outreach, advertising and printing-- are relatively costly. As part of our budget conversation the Council introduced a **Pledge Card** and asked participants at the meetings to think about what they would be able to pledge in 2012 as a step toward meeting our projected financial goals. These pledge cards will also be available at Masses this month. The Council asks you to consider your resources and Sophia Christi's mission, then prayerfully determine where the Spirit is leading you in financially supporting the dreams and goals of your community.

And finally, the Council also handed out a **registration/ministry form** which asks you to update your contact information then look at where the Spirit might be calling you to use your gifts, follow your interests, participate in the ministries and/or tend to the needs of Sophia Christi Catholic Community. These forms will also be available at all Masses and I ask you to take one home to ponder and fill out, or complete the form before or after the Liturgy next weekend.

We are entering a new phase of our development. New invitations and new opportunities loom on the horizon. What do you see? What do you hear? Where is the Spirit leading us? leading you? We will

have another community meeting sometime after Easter to further discuss what each of us is thinking as we steer a course together toward our fifth year as a community.

A pastoral reminder--if you or someone you know has a pastoral need that isn't being met, please don't hesitate to give me a call. You have my email address in this mailing, and my office phone number is 503-286-3584. Feel free to use either one. You can contact me anytime for conversation, home visitation, sacraments of reconciliation or anointing, home Masses or other pastoral care needs.

Food for the St. Andrew Episcopal Food Pantry

We received the following message from Kathleen Greene this month thanking us for our January contributions:

We can't thank you enough for your 75 pounds of wonderful donations. Thanks to all of you our clients are good-smelling, clean-shaven, and have clean hair and bodies. The hygiene items are so very hard to receive and buy. Your donations really helped so many people. The deodorant, shaving foam, shampoo, razors, female products and baby diapers were so needed.

Also included were some wonderful items to be given to those who eat in a campsite, on the street and in their car. The Spam meats, bags of tiny, boxed raisins, bags of nuts, juice cans, and peanut butter were perfect to give out. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

God bless you and your loved ones for your continued giving. --Kathleen Greene, Pantry Manager

PS, Be sure to watch KGW TV in March for their food drive support of the Oregon Food Bank. KGW TV crew came to our pantry and interviewed us. They also visited other food pantries. I was nervous and I have no idea what I answered to their questions.

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.

As you continue your Lenten journey, remember the invitation to prayer, fasting and almsgiving is really an invitation into that inner territory where God lives and moves within you. Whatever your unique challenges may be in fully living the Gospel, the One who knows you best, and loves you most, is right there at all times. The last line of next Sunday's gospel reads: "Jesus did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well." Jesus knows your struggles, knows the complexities of the human experience and the interplay of upbringing and brain chemistry that influence how you see, how you react to circumstances, and what your particular weaknesses and strengths provide as you hoist that cross on your shoulder and walk your own *via dolorosa* with as much courage as you can muster. All he asks is that you remember he's there. Remember to pray. Be as generous as possible and let go as much as you can. You are cherished beyond measure. Love accompanies you every step of the way.

May you experience Christ's presence in your life this Lent,

Toni