

December 2, 2012

Advent greetings to all of you,

On this first Sunday of Advent we enter a season of waiting, of hope. We are called on a journey, asked to follow a star that leads to a humble stable where an unwed teen mother is about to give birth to her first child. All we know about this young girl is that she said “yes” to an angel and, in so doing, put her life, her reputation and her future on the line. One day she was an ordinary kid, and the next she was in the throes of a God-thing that took over her life bringing joy, stress, hardship, questions and, ultimately, a tortuous walk with her son that would rip open the heart of any parent. It’s a story we’ve heard so many times we may forget the stark human-ness of it, the sheer craziness of setting out on a trek by foot, almost nine months pregnant, with no idea where you might be at the onset of labor! We give little real thought to what that “yes” meant, in the short term and the long term for Mary, or for Joseph. “Yesses” are like that, especially any “yes” requiring we follow an illusive “sign in the heavens” or a persistent “inner prompting” that won’t go away. We don’t really know what the “angels” in our lives are inviting us into, or where a “yes” to the invitation might lead. We can be assured an acceptance of the invitation will require faith at some point, courage at another, love and compassion continuously and a growing capacity to return again and again to a place of hope. Advent reminds us that darkness is an unavoidable part of the human journey, even as it is part of the natural cycles and rhythms of our days and our seasons. Darkness teaches us faith, hope, courage, teaches us the depths of love, teaches in ways we often resist and reject fearing the unknown, fearing pain. Yet when light enters the darkness and illuminates those “dark” teachings, it transforms them through insight, understanding and integration into treasured gifts whose value matches or exceeds the tremendous cost experienced through the teaching process. Childbirth is like that. Mothers, like Mary, teach us that. The story of Advent is a story of waiting in the darkness, waiting faithfully, courageously, saying “yes” to the angel, saying “yes” to the difficult and dangerous journey even though physically arduous and psychologically exhausting, walking toward who-knows-where in the dark we follow the star. All we know is that birth will happen. Our job is to wait with expectancy and anticipation, making ready, preparing a place in our hearts for the unfolding story as we live into the “yes,” in the dark, walking with faith, holding onto the hand of hope.

Our readings for December Liturgies: December 8 & 9 – Bar 4:1-9; Phil 1:4-6, 8-11; Lk 3:1-6. December 24 – Is 9:1-6; Heb 1:1-3; Lk 2:1-14. December 30 – Sir 3:2-7,12-14; Col 3:12-17; Lk 2:41-52.

Mass Schedule This Month

Our Mass in **Portland** will be Saturday, **December 8**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. Potluck follows. Please bring your favorite entrees, vegetable dishes, salads and desserts. Choir rehearsal begins at 4:00 and all interested singers and musicians are invited to come and participate.

Our Mass in **Eugene** will be **December 9, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd, at 4:00pm**. Please bring your favorite dish to share at the potluck afterwards: entreés, veggies, salads, and desserts. Please come at 3:00 for rehearsal if you are interested in being part of the choir as a musician or singer.

We will have our 3rd annual Christmas Eve Mass at Dianne and Amanda's, **December 24, at 9:00pm**. Directions to their home will be provided at Masses this weekend. Everyone in Portland, Eugene and Battleground is invited. For more information email Amanda: apowell@uoregon.edu or call 541-687-8552.

On Sunday, **December 30, at 10:30am** we will celebrate Mass in **Battleground**. **To accommodate Christmas weekend, please note the date change from the 4th to the 5th Sunday of the month!!** The address is 26605 NE 96th Ct., Battle Ground, WA. For further information or directions call Helen at 360-687-7475 or email her at umphrey@ipns.com.

Pastoral Update

If you haven't filled out a **registration/ministry form** please remember to do so when you come to Mass this weekend. You may also receive and return this form, as well as pledge cards, via email. Let me know if you prefer this method and I'll be happy to send one or both to you. Both are also available at all Masses.

Retreat

I received the following reflection from one of the retreat participants on Saturday and have permission to share them with you:

December 1. The sun is out and there is yard work to do and Christmas shopping to start. Instead I've decided to attend the Sophia Christi retreat. It's being held at Northminster Presbyterian, our Portland home, and I know most of the other 22 people there. From the gathering circle where we shared our desires for the retreat, I knew I'd made a good choice. During the day Carmel gave us opportunities to ponder Scripture, to contemplate the Advent theme of "waiting," to share and to reflect silently. The sharing was deep and meaningful. We prayed, listened to stories and music, sang and told one another over and over what a gift it is to be part of this community and to participate in this retreat. Though the sun went away mid-morning, the light of God's love never left the room. At the end of the day we sat in a circle in the dining hall for Mass. After our dialogue homily we blessed and anointed incoming and outgoing Council members. As we gathered around them and laid hands of thanks and support, God's spirit was clearly present. The world may be in crisis and turmoil, but for the brief time of our gathering, God's love and promise overwhelmed those realities and I was filled with peace. –Patti Pomerantz

Annual Meeting & Parish Council Update

An annual meeting is required of all not-for-profit organizations. On Saturday the Parish Council met for its first annual meeting during the lunch break at the Sophia Christi retreat. Danielle Bastien of Portland was unanimously elected to become a member of the Council. Dianne Turner, who shepherded us through the process to become a 501(c)3 non-profit with dedication and wonderful leadership, resigned from the role of president and from the Council. Joy Wallace of Portland was then elected to fill the presidential position. Leanne Kerner continues as Treasurer and Judith Manning as secretary. Carol Zolkoske and Judith are the two remaining Council members from Eugene. In the year ahead the Council would like to add more people from both Eugene and Portland so a stronger bridge can be built between our groups. Creativity and vision is needed. Please think carefully about your gifts, skills and interests and how you might be able to use them as part of the Parish Council. The work of the Council is to help us discern where the Spirit is leading us as a community and to help us manifest our mission and our dreams. If Sophia Christi existed in Portland or Eugene only, a Council might not be necessary, but community meetings haven't been sufficient as a leadership model given the distance and small differences between our two local groups. It's an exciting journey we've undertaken, and now that the non-profit process and paperwork are behind us, the Council can give its attention to Mission and vision. Please consider becoming part of the Council. Talk to Council members after Mass next weekend if you are interested in learning more about what's involved.

Website Update—www.sophiachristi.org

I'd like to draw your attention once again to our website and ask you to check it out! If you have photos from Sophia Christi events you are willing to share, please send them to Bill Urban realdealurban@gmail.com and John Coutu jcoutu1969@gmail.com for possible inclusion on the site. If you have ideas, questions or suggestions feel free to email Bill and John so that our webpages become more useful to the population we are hoping to serve and attempting to reach. If you are part of the Eugene community, please consider bringing a camera to events and liturgies so our activities become more fully represented on the website. Also, if you are interested in becoming more involved in developing the site or in creating a social media presence for Sophia Christi, please contact Bill and John at the email addresses above.

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, weddings, funerals, memorial services or other pastoral care needs.

Food for the St. Andrew Episcopal Food Pantry

Today we received the following message from Kathleen Greene, Director of the Food Pantry:

Dear Most wonderful givers,

I am so thankful for you and for the items you give to our food pantry. This last week we received 127 pounds of great food and so many needed items like toilet paper, diapers and hygiene for women. We are truly blessed to have you in our lives.

I ask for your prayers for my family members, Molly and Megan. Molly, my little sister, has third stage cancer and my niece Megan is on bed rest due to problems with her unborn son. Thank you and God bless, Kathleen

Please remember to bring food and personal hygiene donations for the Food Pantry when you come to Mass next weekend. **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 we move toward Christmas, Advent invites us to keep hope alive within the depths of darkness. It reminds us we are on a journey toward the Light, both seasonally and spiritually. We await the re-birth of the sun at Solstice (December 21) when the balance between light and darkness shifts and the days grow longer, the nights shorter. But most important for us as Christians, we await the re-birth of the Son at Christmas. We prepare our hearts for this event during the next 4 weeks because we are meant to be the pregnant ones, the ones who will give birth to Christ in our lives, our homes and families, our neighborhoods and communities, our churches. May your waiting time be rich with expectancy, and may your hope be nourished or re-kindled in anticipation of the Light.

Blessings and peace of this holy season,

Toni