

February 3, 2013

Greetings this mid-winter day,

It is February and Ash Wednesday is just around the corner—February 13, to be exact. Though we celebrate the 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time when we gather for Mass next weekend, we stand on the cusp of Lent, a season of introspection on one hand and of justice-oriented care and concern for the poor and marginalized on the other. Scripture, like life itself, challenges us to balance not only our needs with those of others, but to balance the need for retreat, for prayer, with the Gospel mandate to serve others through the use of talents, skills and resources bestowed on us by a loving God. The inner life and its outward expression live in a continuing state of tension. Each sustains the other and calls the other forth. Inhalation doesn't happen without exhalation.

Exhalation without inhalation is death. We need both to survive. At the conclusion of our reading from Isaiah next week, the author of the passage says to God "here I am; send me!" This is the movement of exhalation. "You have prepared me, God, and I have prepared myself to do whatever work you have in mind for me. I'm ready. Send me," we say. Before the author makes this statement, however, there is recognition of personal failings and an expression of unworthiness: "I am a person of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips yet I've seen God. I'm doomed!" Recognizing those unbecoming motives of the heart and applying ourselves to the transformative inner work necessary to change unhealthy habits and disrupt selfish patterns is the work of Lent. We inhale the love of God, move into the inner room to pray, to know ourselves better, understand our motives more deeply, form our conscience by aligning our hearts with the heart of Christ, the Wisdom of Sophia, the love and mercy of God. This is the process of inhalation that prepares us once again to be sent into the world, stronger, more courageous, with bigger hearts, wider perspectives and greater capacities for compassion and kindness. We are then prepared to exhale mercy and collaborate in the work of justice-making that can bring about the reign of God on earth.

Our readings for January Liturgies: February 9 & 10 – Is 6:1-8; 1 Cor 15:1-11; Lk 5:1-11. February 24 – Gen 15:5-12,17-18; Phil 3:17—4:1; Lk 9:28-36.

Mass Schedule This Month

Our Mass in **Portland** will be Saturday, **February 9**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way at 5:00pm**. Potluck follows. Please bring your favorite entrées, 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 **February 10**, at **First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd, at 4:00pm**. Please bring your favorite dish to share at the potluck afterwards: entrées, 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.

On Sunday, **February 24**, at **10:30am** we will celebrate Mass in **Battleground**. 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

Your **2012 Summary of Contributions** to Sophia Christi is in the mail and should be reaching you sometime this week. Leanne has done a wonderful job of tracking our financial information throughout this first year as a non-profit and in getting these letters out to everyone so quickly. My heartfelt gratitude goes out to all of you who have

supported and continue to support this community. Because of you we have been able to reach disaffected and marginalized Catholics who stopped by our booths at Portland Gay Pride and the Eugene Celebration, print and distribute brochures and bookmarks at both events that provide details about Sophia Christi's mission and Mass schedule, advertise our Easter Liturgy in the Eugene Register-Guard, rent space monthly at both Northminster Presbyterian Church in Portland and First Congregational Church in Eugene, support the Food Pantry at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church with donations of food and other necessities to assist poor and suffering families in North Portland, and continue being a beacon of Vatican II theology and pastoral outreach in the region. There will always be more to do in offering hope to the spiritually and physically beleaguered of our community. I look forward to continuing this vital ministry with all of you in the months ahead.

Don't forget to pick up and fill out a **registration/ministry form** when you come to Mass this weekend if you haven't already done so. 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.

Easter in Eugene

Following a request that we celebrate Easter Sunday Mass in Eugene again this year, we have reserved the chapel at First Congregational Church for 4:00pm, March 31. Following our advertising success last year in reaching out to the larger community, we have decided to purchase space in the "Easter Services" section of the Register-Guard for the second time hoping to reach even more people looking for a progressive spiritual home. This would be a wonderful time to gather the entire Sophia Christi community together. If you live in the Portland area, please consider carpooling to Eugene for an afternoon Mass, dinner and hospitality. In addition to this Easter Mass will still gather to celebrate Eucharist on the second Sunday of March as usual in Eugene, and the second Saturday in Portland.

New Archbishop for Portland Archdiocese

Many of you may have read the front-page article in the Oregonian yesterday announcing the Vatican's appointment of Bishop Alexander Sample, currently of the Marquette Diocese, to replace Archbishop Vlazny who has now retired. Sample will be installed as the new Archbishop on April 2nd and will have the distinction of being the youngest archbishop in the nation, at age 52. He is also considered a rising star in the hierarchy of the Church. Like all Vatican appointees he toes the party line when it comes to "cultural" questions such as same-sex marriage, women's reproductive health and religious freedom (as defined by conservative politicians in matters of national health care reform). Theologically he embraces the so-called "extra-ordinary form" of the Mass (the Latin rite Mass), Benedict's "new evangelism," and the impossibility of women's ordination. In the Oregonian he is quoted as saying that it will take some time for him to get to know the church, people and culture of this diocese and that his "first task is to learn, to listen, to observe, not be like a bull in a china shop." Let's pray that he will listen with an open mind and heart, appreciate what he hears from the margins, and learn from the people of this Archdiocese what it means to be a compassionate presence and advocate for those most hurt by the Church and by society as a whole.

Website Update—www.sophiachristi.org

Check out our website when you have a chance and send your ideas and comments to Bill Urban realdealurban@gmail.com and John Coutu jcoutu1969@gmail.com. If you have photos you are willing to share please send them along as well. 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. Watch the calendar for notices of upcoming events in both Portland and Eugene.

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

Last week we received the following message from Kathleen, Food Pantry manager:
Dear Sophia Christi Catholic Community,

We received 219 pounds of wonderful items from your kind hearts last month. You have no idea how wonderful the feeling is when I know I have toilet paper, razors, deodorant, diapers, bar soaps and laundry soap. We had a family with a brand new baby boy stop at our pantry for laundry soap and diapers. Thanks to you we could help them out with what they needed. And the food. . .it was great! Hearty soups, tuna, mustard, Mac & Cheese, gravy, mashed potatoes so many wonderful items. We thank you again.

God's blessings on your 2013 and we so love all of you.

Kathleen Greene, Pantry Manager

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.**

In these last days of "ordinary time" before the beginning of Lent perhaps a keener look at the routines of life might be in order. Look at patterns of inhalation and exhalation in your daily activities. Where and when do you find time to pray? How do you experience the tension between introspection, reflection and prayer on the one hand, and attention to the needs of others, service and contributions to the larger community on the other? Do you see patterns in your day-to-day activities that allow for the inward movement of the heart as well as for an outward-focus of activities that address the work of justice, compassion and mercy toward others? This week before the beginning of Lent is a good time to look at these patterns and, during prayer, to begin asking for guidance regarding what specific Lenten practices might help you initiate and sustain a healthy balance between the cycles of inhalation and exhalation in your daily routines.

Winter blessings to all of you,

Toni