

May 4, 2013

Blessings of Easter/Pentecost,

It is the evening of a glorious spring day. After spending the entire afternoon writing this newsletter a “fatal” technical anomaly for which I have no explanation began suddenly erasing all my work letter by letter, line by line, at the speed of an ink-jet printer racing to the finish line in reverse. Without recourse to a “cancel” function, I did everything I could think of to stop the destruction of my painstaking work but, in the end, everything I had written was gone having vanished before my disbelieving eyes. After the “automatic recover” utility failed to retrieve the document, I resigned myself to starting over from scratch having lost nearly a day’s labor and the flow of thought that makes creating a newsletter both do-able and satisfying.

As I sit here now at the end of a long day I have begun to ponder what the “lesson” might be, and what this incident has to tell me about the Feast of the Ascension, the conclusion of the Easter season and preparations for the Holy Spirit’s arrival at Pentecost. If anything, the experience seemed more like a Good Friday moment than an anticipation of Pentecost!

I am one who suffers under the illusion, at times, that God is in the “flow” while the “devil” is in the hindrances. I call this an illusion because many of my most important life lessons and gifts have arrived on the heels of interruptions and destructive energies I believed, at the time, to be in direct opposition to God’s life in me. Only after grief subsided a bit did I begin to realize the newness in me, the growth, the increase in awareness or strength, the presence of Spirit and reality of grace that entered my life through the losses involved in something being taken away.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples lost everything they loved and depended on for reassurance, connection with God, security, and meaning. All they had left was a call to witness and a promise of return. They were on their own now. Without his presence, his words and his teachings they were now expected to preach, to heal and to feed his sheep. They were fishermen for the most part. That’s all they knew how to do. So they waited for the arrival of the Spirit. They waited for in-spiration. They let go into Jesus’ promise of an Advocate and waited for God’s movement within them to take them where they needed to go.

When the Spirit descended on Pentecost they felt God’s life fill them with understanding. All they had to do now was let the story of their experience with Jesus tell itself over and over again. Every time they told the story it re-energized them with its truth and its power to transform and heal. It transformed them in the telling. They were fully open to Spirit as it moved through them to the people they met along the way. It was like a dam breaking open. There was no stopping the words and God’s power within them. It all had to flow. Had Jesus not left the life and power of the Spirit in them would likely have remained dormant and untapped. His leaving was a gift they would never have chosen which allowed God’s life in them to erupt untarnished and full-blown. Our readings for May Liturgies: May 11 & 12 – Acts 1:1-11; Ps 117; Eph 1:17-23; Mk 16:15-20.

Mass Schedule This Month

Our Mass in **Portland** will be Saturday, **May 11**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. Potluck follows. We will celebrate with

entrees, salads, veggies 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 Sunday, **May 12, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd, at 4:00pm**. A potluck will continue our celebration with entrees, salads, veggies and desserts. Please come at 3:00 for rehearsal if you are interested in being part of the choir as a musician or singer.

PLEASE NOTE: There will be no Mass in Battle Ground this month. Next Mass will be June 23 at 10:30am.

Pastoral Update

One of the unique characteristics of Sophia Christi is that our community spans three geographic locations over approximately 160 miles along the I-5 corridor from Eugene, OR to Battle Ground, WA. In each location we celebrate Mass at least monthly and do our best to maintain connections with one another despite the distances between us. The pastoral council provides an important bridge between locations doing the lion's share of work in keeping our family together. Retreats and social events like the picnic last summer provide invaluable opportunities for getting to know each other across the natural boundaries of space and time. This will continue to be a creative challenge for our geographically extended community. I wonder whether there might be a few people interested in community building, vision advancement and decision making out there? If you are one of those people, I invite you to write that on a **ministry form** at Mass this weekend, or talk with me or a Council member about your ideas and how we might work together to implement them. We are looking for new Council members for next year. Please consider whether you feel called to this important work.

Website

The pastoral council, along with members from Eugene, Portland and Battle Ground who expressed interest in working on the website, have created a plan for upgrading our site in the next two months. Since our community is spread far and wide, finding a way to communicate more effectively, pass information along more quickly and reach out to the larger population of spiritually hungry progressives more successfully led to the need for new internet tools. Launch date for the upgraded site will likely be the end of June or first part of July if everything goes smoothly. More information will be included in the next newsletter.

Pride Season

June is the beginning of Pride events around the country. Last year we had a wonderfully successful outreach at the **Portland Pride Festival** by having our own booth at Waterfront Park and marching in the Parade under the colorful Sophia Christi banner Dianna created for just that occasion. This year's Festival will be **June 15 and 16**. We will need to staff the booth throughout the weekend, including Sunday morning during the Parade itself. Please consider being part of this important outreach effort. The LGBTQ community has suffered greatly at the hands of the Vatican and the Catholic hierarchy. Doing our part to counteract those voices by witnessing to Church (we are church) acceptance and full inclusion is one way we live out our vision and our mission. In this critical year, as Basic Rights Oregon launches its push for Marriage Equality in this State, we also stand boldly on the side of justice for the rights and full protection of all Oregon families. We will begin taking names this weekend for

volunteers willing to staff the booth as well as those willing to march in the parade under Sophia Christi's banner.

Also mark your calendars for **Vancouver's Saturday in the Park Pride** which is scheduled for **July 13**, 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. **Eugene Pride** will take place **August 10** from noon to 7:00 pm. Both events occur on second Saturdays of the month. If you are interested in spearheading a Sophia Christi presence at either location please let me or one of the Council members know soon since booth arrangements need to be made well in advance.

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

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 our overly busy and distracted culture it often seems irresponsible or even "lazy" to wait for anything, let alone to wait for something as subtle as Spirit to move our hearts and lives in a direction we haven't effort-fully created ourselves. I had put a lot of "effort" into that newsletter, for instance, and had lost the entire sum of my work, felt a little numb, angry, bereaved—and lost. Yet as I finish this letter two hours later I see God's presence in my life today as I would not have otherwise. I feel grace in that awareness, feel loved and tended by Love itself, feel seen and held in Holy Mother's warm embrace. Had the computer not suddenly become "possessed" by an energy beyond my control it's unlikely I would have given God's presence in my life much thought today driven as I was to complete a "project" by sundown. It isn't easy for God to get my attention when I'm busily occupied by a multitude of tasks. It seems ludicrous that my attempt to do "God's work" would actually prevent God from having my attention but the sad fact is God remains background when my focus is on whatever the task at hand. I apparently needed a tongue of fire today. After losing all those words I'm left with a sense of gratitude. Yes it was challenging to re-create the newsletter. And some sections are shorter on quality since I didn't have the same patience for detail I had on the first time through. But the overall message is more what God wants me, and you apparently, to hear this month: let go what you think is important so Spirit can flow through your words and your life with grace. Spirit fires the knowing of how tenderly we are held and how deeply we are loved.

May Spirit's palpable presence be with us all as Pentecost draws near,

Toni