

August 4, 2013

Anniversary blessings to all of you!

If you followed Pope Francis' visit to Brazil you probably heard more about his outreach to the poor, his open car and warm embrace of people along the motorcade route, his words to church leaders of the region and maybe even his remarks to the bishops gathered for World Youth Day. So much is positive about this Pope's dedication to the poor, his humility and his clear example of Jesus' instruction to go out into the world and serve rather than be served. The progressive wing of the Church is finding much in Francis to celebrate. Many of his words spread balm over wounds re-opened again and again by harsh attacks and callous indifference experienced throughout the last two pontificates.

And yet...and yet...his re-statement of John Paul's "definitive" closed door policy toward women called to ordination, following on the heels of his April affirmation (according to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) of the "findings of the doctrinal assessment and program of reform" for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious leads to serious questions about his willingness to hear and respect the consciences and spiritual leadership of Catholic women. In that now-famous interview he granted reporters as he flew back from Brazil two things stand out for me—how quickly he relegated the question of ordaining women to the trash heap, and the insult he delivered to women theologians everywhere in calling for "a deeper theology of women." For decades these women scholars have been developing this very theology, apparently unbeknownst to Pope Francis. Though gay priests may feel some relief in hearing "who am I to judge...they are our brothers" I can't help wondering whether this pope or any male hierarch will ever claim their sisters with such openness and respect, such willingness to listen, learn and not judge.

I realize this is only the beginning of what, hopefully, will be an increasingly progressive and change-oriented pontificate, yet pastoral concern for the poor, if not critically invested in the empowerment of women, will simply be more of the same with a kind, paternal face. It is important we stay alert and not simply give Pope Francis a "pass" on issues that continue to harm the fabric of our Church by undermining or ignoring the needs and concerns of so many: LGBT couples and families, LCWR and U.S. women religious placed under Vatican scrutiny, women called to ordination and the majority of baptized Catholics who want them ordained, divorced and remarried Catholics, clerical sexual abuse survivors still being treated as adversaries by hierarchical officials...the list could go on. A consistent ethic of pastoral compassion must include real dialogue on these issues that allows for a change of heart and a change of practice, rules and structures. The "world's parish priest" must listen; as baptized Catholics and "citizens" of this Church (Fr. Helmut Schüller's term) we have the right to require this of our new pope. Anything less dishonors the Church that we are.

Our readings for August Liturgies: August 10 & 11 – Wis 18:6-9; Ps 33; Heb 11:1-2,8-19; Lk 12:32-48. August 25 – Is 66:18-21; Ps 117:1-2; Heb 12:5-7,11-13; Lk 13:22-30.

Mass Schedule This Month

Our Mass in **Portland** will be Saturday, **August 10**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. **Note: we will be celebrating our 6th Anniversary this month! Please bring flowers from your garden to decorate the altar** as a symbol of our flowering as a community of conscience and freedom. We will celebrate with a potluck of

special entrées, 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, **August 11, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd, at 4:00pm.** **Note: we will be celebrating our 6th Anniversary this month!** A potluck will continue our celebration with entrées, 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.

On Sunday, **August 25, at 4:00pm** we will celebrate Mass in **Battleground.** **Please note the change in time.** 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

This month marks our 6th Anniversary as a community! I remember that first liturgy as though it were yesterday. We had made arrangements with the pastor of St. Andrews Episcopal Church to have our first Mass there. The announcement had gone out. The Oregonian had published an article about my ordination and included the date and time. And the day before we were to gather, an official within the Episcopal Diocese pulled the plug, fearing repercussions from the Portland Archdiocese. I happened to know the pastor of University Park United Methodist Church, just four blocks east of St. Andrews. We scrambled! Signs were posted everywhere, emails were sent and calls made. In the end people found their way and 45 people gathered for our first Eucharist on August 25, 2007. It has been a remarkable six years. May we enter our seventh with humility, an openness to the subtle voice of Sophia, further discernment of our calling, and a deep, abiding joy.

Website

If you haven't yet sent a **story or comment** for the website, and you have intended to do so—it is not too late!! This is the place to share experiences of community prayer, to talk about what draws you to Sophia Christi, why you continue to be involved, and what it means to you to be part of an inclusive Catholic community. Our web address is and will continue to be:

www.sophiachristi.org

Eugene Pride

Eugene Pride will take place **August 10 from noon to 7:00 pm, at Alton Baker Park.** Sophia Christi will have a booth at this event, staffed by members of the community throughout the day. Stop by if you have a chance and see what's happening this year. If you haven't yet signed the petition to put freedom to marry for same-sex couples on the 2014 Oregon ballot and would like to do so, there will be a petition at the booth.

Eugene Celebration

The Eugene Celebration is August 23-25. Sophia Christi will have a booth in the Community Causeway again this year staffed by volunteers from 11:00am to 5:00pm both Saturday and Sunday. Stop by and visit! Look for our colorful banner and ask whether the volunteers need anything. This is a wonderful community project and we hope to see you there!

Upcoming Events

Call to Action Northwest Oregon will be sponsoring another wonderful event in the Fall. This was mentioned in the June newsletter, but if you didn't get it on your calendar I urge you to Save the Date now. **Dr. Aimee Upjohn Light**, Assistant professor of Theology at Duquesne University will be in Portland **October 12**, from noon to 3:00pm at Central Lutheran Church,

1820 NE 21st. The title of her talk is: A Catholic Call for a More Inclusive Church: A Feminist Perspective. She will give a short history of Catholic liberation theologies, arguing for a relational vision of the world's connection to God.

Report--Community Picnic

The community picnic on Saturday was a wonderful success! Our numbers grew to 18 this year, while another six sent their regrets due to a variety of circumstances. We had a wonderful, relaxing afternoon under the enormous oak trees as we looked out over golden brown oat fields not yet ready for harvest. The day was sunny and warm, wonderfully conducive to conversations across the boundaries of town and city. Carol's husband, Gary, took a group of us through the forest he planted on a clear-cut parcel of their property over 40 years ago. When I asked how it felt to walk through this mature forest of fir and fern, he said he never imagined at the time he would experience this lush habitat from the work of his hands. I've thought about his comment many times since then. What "seedlings" did I plant 40 years ago that are lush and mature now? That thought drew me back to Sophia Christi. I never imagined 40 years ago that I would ever have the opportunity to fulfill my calling to priesthood, not to mention that I would have the privilege of serving this community. Yet here I am, and here we are! Six year is a very short time in the grand scheme of things, yet we too have planted seeds that will grow to maturity in some distant future we may never see. We have planted in faith. I trust we will continue tending what we've planted, and leave the forest in God's creative hands.

Report—Helmut Schüller Event

It was a very warm Sunday afternoon and the temperature inside Central Lutheran Church in NE Portland was uncomfortable. All attention in the crowded pews, however, was riveted on Fr. Helmut Schüller, founder of the Austrian Priests' Initiative (pfarrer-initiative.at). Portland was one of only 15 US cities Fr Schüller visited as part of his Catholic Tipping Point tour (CatholicTippingPoint.org). There were 15 members of Sophia Christi attending and I imagine we each came away inspired and enriched by his remarks about the Austrian priests' call to 'disobedience' of Church mandates in order to be 'obedient' to the needs of Church communities. He called on everyone present to think of themselves as Church citizens and to stand in solidarity with everyone who is being sanctioned by the hierarchy. It is this vocal solidarity among the Church citizenship in Austria that has protected his movement from official reprimands. I was particularly struck by his response to a question on what individuals can do to support his call for transparent church reform. In addition to standing in solidarity with those being sanctioned by the Vatican, he said, it is necessary to recognize the danger of silently operating 'below the radar'. He called this a type of 'back-door' change and said it is ineffective in creating the larger systemic changes the Austrian Priest's Initiative is advocating. It was an inspiring afternoon, with about 300-400 people in attendance. I hope it will bring renewed purpose to our community as we work to create a broader, more public foundation for the important work we are called to do. —Patti Pomerantz

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

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

So sorry for the lack of thanks to all of you. Your giving kindness is over the top. The bar soaps, hotel shampoos & soap are so needed. We are so thankful for all the soup, rice, boxed dinners salt, pepper and the cash donations we received. This summer we received a box of change from Sophia Christi Catholic Community. That box of change let us buy 48 boxes (a case) of Mac & Cheese, laundry powder and toilet paper. We are able to buy some items of food from the Oregon Food Bank for 5 & 10 cents a pound. Please pray for those close to the pantry who need kidneys. And prayers of thanks for my little sister who is in remission from 4th stage ovarian cancer! --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.**

It's important to have the faith of Sarah, to go where we're called though we don't know our destination, and it is also important make our voices heard and become increasingly active citizens of this Church that is ours. Let us pray for Pope Francis as he has asked us to do. Let's pray that "the world's parish priest" will open his heart wide enough to become a committed pastor in collaboration with the People of God, and his mind deep enough to recognize God is calling women as well as coupled individuals to the priesthood. What will it mean for Sophia Christi to become a more active presence in the Church, I wonder? What are the questions we might ask ourselves during our seventh year?

Blessings for a bountiful summer, and happy anniversary!

Toni