

January 5, 2014

Happy New Year and a Blessed Epiphany,

In watching news coverage from around the world over the internet New Year's Eve, I was struck by the spirit of hope that seemed to be circling the globe, and the significant oneness of human desire for joy, unity and peace. Drummers stood atop the Great Wall of China in Beijing, pyrotechnic splendor sprouted from the world's tallest building in Dubai, revelers crowded the streets of Jakarta, Tokyo, Paris, London, Rio de Janeiro, Times Square in New York City, and other major cities around the world. It was spiritually and emotionally stirring. Yet I was also aware of the many absent and devastated cities—Damascus, Kabul, Benghazi, Baghdad, Juba, Kigali—and the millions of people for whom the advent of 2014 is but a blip on the screen of agony, displacement, grief and terror. Where are we going as each new year dawns and are we moving toward a grand realization that we are truly in this together, that we are one people?

A headline on the front page of the New York Times this morning included the phrase "Gospel of Guns." It assaulted my sensibilities and led me to reflect on the hope-filled faces crowding the streets on New Year's Eve. The word "gospel" is a translation of the Greek word *evangelion* and it means "good news." Where is the "good" in news about guns, I wonder? Where is that hopeful, beneficial and uplifting information that allows one's spirit to soar and feel connected with the wholeness and goodness of life?

In today's Gospel astrologers arrive from the east having followed a star to Bethlehem. The light that guides these astrologers to the birthplace of hope is quickly challenged by the power of Herod's fear and unbridled freedom to destroy whatever he sees as a threat. Throughout the pages of Scripture, as throughout life, light and dark weave a confusing tapestry that makes little sense to the human mind. Calling the light "good" and the dark "evil" only sets the stage for further conflict without helping us learn the lessons of love and compassion Jesus' Gospel would have you and me follow.

When we gather for Mass as a community next weekend we will celebrate the baptism of Jesus by John in the river Jordan. The words of Isaiah will have been read which state: "I, the Lord, have called you for the victory of justice." We will also hear Jesus refer to his baptism by John as a fulfillment of the requirements of justice. As a community following the Gospel of Jesus how do we hear the call to justice-making? As individuals sensitive to the constant play of dark and light in our own lives and in the world, can we hold our particular thread in this mind-boggling global tapestry trusting the Weaver's design and the Weaver's hands?

**Readings for Liturgies:** Over the last several months I have been including the Sunday readings for our Masses in this newsletter. Many of you may not know that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' website provides readings for each day of the year through a link on its homepage. By simply clicking a date on the calendar at the right of the screen you are immediately taken to the readings for that day. Since our newsletter provides you with that link <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/> and the Sophia Christi website does as well, I will refer you to these sources for now. Let me

know if they don't work or aren't sufficient for you. If not I can return to including the readings in this newsletter as I've done before. I will watch for your response.

### Mass Schedule This Month

Mass in **Portland** will be Saturday, **January 11**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. Stay for the potluck after Mass and bring an entree, salad, veggie dish or dessert. Choir rehearsal begins at 4:00 and all interested singers and musicians are invited to come and participate.

Mass in **Eugene** will be Sunday, **January 12**, at **First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23<sup>rd</sup>**, at **4:00pm**. Plan to stay for the potluck after Mass. Bring an entree, salad, veggie dish or dessert. If you are interested in being part of the choir as a musician or singer, please come at 3:00 for rehearsal.

Masses in **Battle Ground** this month at the Umphrey House Church, Helen presiding: Sundays, **January 5**, and **January 26** at **10:30am**.

### Upcoming Events:

#### Special Meeting of the Parish Council

A special meeting of the Parish Council will be held **Sunday, January 19, from 2-4pm at Goudy Commons, Willamette University in Salem**. All members of Sophia Christi are welcome to attend. Items on the agenda include (but are not limited to): 2014 budget; upcoming community retreat; website member portal; possible by-law changes; outreach in 2014. If you have ideas or questions, would like to hear more or would like to come to the meeting, please talk to me or to one of the Council members (Joy Wallace, Leanne Kerner, Danielle Bastien, Carol Zolkoske, Judith Manning, Jim and Joy Learned, Mary Goody). We can work out carpooling if that appeals to you! Directions are also available at <http://wilamette.edu/about/visit/directions/index.html>

#### Lenten Retreat – March 29

I hope many of you are planning to participate in this spiritual retreat opportunity on the eve of the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent. Carol, one of our Parish Council members from Eugene visited the Silver Falls Conference Center this week to get a better idea of the space we will be using for this spring retreat. She sent photos we hope to post to our website and says:

*The meeting hall was very nice. It had lots of nicely cushioned, stacking chairs and a few comfortable soft chairs. There was plenty of room to make a nice circle, plus enough room to make smaller circles if needed. There is also a wood stove and a supply of wood if someone wants to start a fire. I talked to a woman who was with a group of spinners (wool). She said it was their third year renting the cabins and meeting hall and they all just loved it. I found the whole place delightful. You get the impression that you are miles, even years, from anything. There are old growth firs and ferns everywhere. There seemed to be a lot of trails for walking. This is a retreat space where we can all enjoy the peace, beauty and comfort the earth has to offer. -- Carol*

For those of you who might like to stay overnight at the Conference Center, please check the Sophia Christi website for new information at [www.sophiachristi.org](http://www.sophiachristi.org). We

were given conflicting details about costs and should have this sorted out in the next couple of days. A deposit for each cabin we wish to reserve must be sent to Silver Falls by the end of this month, so we need a count soon. There are seven cabins, six with three twin beds each and one with a double bed. All cabins have a sink and toilet. Showers are located off the meeting hall. See below for photographs of Conference Center.

## Pastoral Update:

### Annual Meeting -- Update

The annual meeting of the Parish Council was held **Sunday, December 15 in Salem**. Ten members of Sophia Christi were present: Helen and Pat from Battle Ground, Judith and Carol from Eugene, Jim and Joy from Woodland, WA, and Leanne, Danielle, Delphine and Toni from Portland.

Leanne completed her term as Treasurer and stepped down, though she will remain on the Council, and Carol Zolkoske was elected as our new Treasurer. Judith Manning continues as Secretary. Three new members were elected to the Council: Jim Learned, Joy Learned and Mary Goody.

The Council learned that those gathering for Mass at Helen's in Battle Ground these last two years had met with Toni and Helen in November to discuss their new situation following Helen's ordination. At the meeting the group unanimously decided to remain part of Sophia Christi, and Mary Goody volunteered to represent Battle Ground on the parish council. This is an exciting development and raises new possibilities and considerations for the Council and the community to ponder over the next few months.

New and old business was discussed including the website and some of its future possibilities; new potential budgetary needs for 2014 as ministry in Battle Ground unfolds; pastor stipend; possible changes at Northminster this year; details surrounding our Lenten retreat at Silver Falls; and mission/outreach considerations in the year ahead. The Council decided to call a special meeting January 19 to make decisions regarding the 2014 budget, to follow up on details of the retreat and further develop ideas involving outreach and mission in the coming year. As always, everyone in Sophia Christi is encouraged to come and participate in these meetings.

### A Message from the Parish Council

Each month a member of the Parish Council will be writing a short piece for the newsletter. This month Danielle Bastien continues her reflection on the spirituality of money:

*Reflecting on the gospel has led me to understand that spirituality is woven into all aspects of life, and money is no exception. For most of my life I have had the privilege of not having to think about money. My basic needs and more were taken care of, leading to an ambivalence about the role of money in my life. Over the past several years I have made the choice to explore my relationship with money, as well as the social and spiritual implications of financial decisions. Indifference towards and lack of intentionality with money can lead me to spend money on unnecessary things or on things not aligned with my values. Fear and shame around talking about money meant that I remained isolated in my confusion regarding financial decisions and hesitant to advocate for myself in monetary decisions. Allowing spirituality to enter into my attitude*

*toward money brought greater intentionality on a personal and social level. Informed choices of about the use of money--including choices not to spend money in certain ways or places--demonstrates support for causes, practices, and social impact. Creating spaces in which it is safe to talk about money can build connection, a sense of abundance rather than scarcity, personal and community empowerment, and greater awareness of the impact of financial decisions. Bringing money out of the darkness and into the light gives it perspective; money is important, but it is not the sole conveyor of worth, meaning, or power. This exploration of the spirituality of money in my life has led me to greater understanding of who God calls me to be in society. -- Danielle*

### **Website**

If you haven't yet checked out the new website I want to encourage you to do so! As you become familiar with its features you may recognize new ways of staying connected, sharing information with the community and becoming informed of interesting events and new developments in a more timely fashion. In the near future we will be using the website for announcements in the weeks between newsletters. I would love to hear your ideas and read your comments. Bookmark the page [www.sophiachristi.org](http://www.sophiachristi.org) so you have easy access and check in often!

**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](tel: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.**

The ability to differentiate between subtleties of light and dark encountered in the outer world can be illusive and confusing. Overcoming the tendency toward rationalization when attempting to differentiate those same subtleties within ourselves can be confusing and deceptive as well. Gray areas can't simply be forced into categories of black and white, no matter how hard anyone (including institutions) might try. So the questions surrounding justice-making aren't easy to answer. It seems we are meant to grapple with those questions and do our best using the guiding principles of mercy and compassion grounded in the bedrock of God's presence within each and everyone of us as well as present and active in our world. We will, as Pope Francis tells us, make many mistakes along the way. We don't see things clearly because we all have our unique lenses and filters which have been shaped by a multitude of factors we often can't even name. In community, working together, we have a better chance of finding and following Wisdom's path to the heart and soul of "right action" and true justice. With

courage, holding fast to the “good news” we stand here on the threshold of a new year. May Christ’s light and Wisdom’s heartbeat guide us on our way.

Toni





