

February 2, 2014

Candlemas Greetings,

Before the liturgical revisions of Vatican II, it was common to bless candles for use in Church and at home for the year ahead on February 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> during the Candle Mass that day. After those revisions we now celebrate the Feast of The Presentation of the Lord instead (candles de-emphasized) yet the theme of 'light' continues into next week's readings. Isaiah will tell us to share our bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and homeless, "then your light shall break forth like the dawn." The Psalmist will declare that "the just one is a light in darkness to the upright" and Jesus will tell us to let our light shine before others rather than hide it under a bushel.

The theme of 'light' weaves a subtle thread through our holidays from Christmas through Epiphany, Candlemas, Easter and eventually Pentecost. Even though we are a Christ-focused people our ancestry pre-dates Christianity. We are rooted in the rich loam of human history intertwined with earth's cycles of light giving way to darkness only to be re-kindled in the annual spring 'dawning'. The longest day of the year gives birth to the 'returning light' at Winter Solstice, which—not coincidentally—occurs just a few days before Christmas. As the seasonal midpoint between Solstice and Spring Equinox, Candlemas is the day that marks winter's passing and welcomes the first signs of new growth, especially in milder climates. Just today, in fact, I noticed actual blooms on a red bud tree in Portland!

Groundhog Day is an American version of this seasonal awareness. An English poem shows the connection: "If Candlemas be fair and bright, Winter has another flight. If Candlemas brings clouds and rain, Winter will not come again."

Human experience and understanding is imbedded in the natural world. Our religious imaginations are intricately bound to all that earth itself has to teach us. We understand light and dark through the turning of the day and the cycle of the seasons. We know and celebrate the first signs of spring as harbingers of warmth, increased daylight, and the promise of harvest after the frozen fields of winter. All the winter and early spring holidays are about hope and the promise of new life rising from the grip of death. Christianity carries these hopes and promises to a new level insisting that what we witness in nature is a dim reflection of God's overarching plan as demonstrated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Christ is our Light, showing us how to interpret earth's witness, how to see the glowing embers buried in the ashes of winter fires. God's plan includes us, unfolds as we unfold into deeper insight, greater understanding and freedom to act according to Spirit's guidance. We, like Jesus, are equipped to bring light to the world because that light resides within us. We are disciples of Light—Light-bearers—and we are called to radiate that light. Some of its qualities are identified by Isaiah and the Psalmist—mercy, generosity, truthfulness, courage, justice, kindness, and open-hearted welcome. May the flame of these holy qualities radiate through our lives and bring light to the lampstand of our world.

**Readings for Liturgies:** Since no one has contacted me asking that readings for upcoming liturgies continue to be posted in this newsletter I can hope you are using the link provided by USCCB <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/> or have other sources. I will, therefore, discontinue placing them here unless requested to do otherwise, and refer you to the above website or to the link on our website at [www.sophiachristi.org](http://www.sophiachristi.org).

## Mass Schedule This Month

Mass in **Portland** will be Saturday, **February 8**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. Stay for the potluck after Mass and bring an entrée, 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, **February 9**, at **First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23<sup>rd</sup>**, at **4:00pm**. Plan to stay for the potluck after Mass. Bring an entrée, 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.

There will be **no Masses** in **Battle Ground** this month at the Umphrey House Church. Our normal schedule will resume in March with Mass on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month.

## Upcoming Events:

### Lenten Retreat – March 29 – Additional information

I hope many of you are planning to participate in the spiritual retreat we are developing for Sophia Christi members at the Silver Falls Conference Center this Lent. Thirteen people have already signed up to stay at the Conference Center Friday night and **we currently have room for one or two more men interested in sharing a three-bed cabin**. If this is you, please let me know soon so I can add you to the overnight list.

### Cabin and Food Costs

The parish council voted to cover costs for snacks, coffee and tea for the retreat since Silver Falls prohibits us from bringing in 'outside' food. Instead it requires us to purchase all food and beverages on-site. Participants who **do not** spend the night will need to purchase lunch on Saturday. The cost will be approximately \$10.00. Those staying the night will receive dinner Friday night as well as breakfast and lunch on Saturday at no charge, since three meals are included in the price of the cabin rental. Those wishing to stay an extra night (Saturday) are also welcome to do so but we will need to know who you are as soon as possible. You will also receive an additional three meals as part of that additional night's stay.

Silver Falls will provide Sophia Christi with an invoice covering all lodging expenses and meals following the retreat. We are expected to pay our community expenses with one check rather than having individuals take care of their personal costs themselves, so all monies for lodging and meals will be collected by us then sent to Silver Falls later.

**The council decided not to charge a fee for the retreat.** We will, however, be accepting **donations** to cover travel expenses for our facilitator as well as to recoup at least some of the costs related to snacks and incidentals.

### Theme and Schedule

The retreat theme and schedule have not yet been decided, though Lent itself offers numerous avenues for spiritual reflection and deepening. We will end the retreat with Mass. Dianne (our Eugene pianist and guitarist) has offered to assist us with music. Other musicians are also welcome to be involved.

### Sign-Up & Carpooling

**Sign-up sheets for those wishing to carpool will be available after Masses next**

**weekend, as will sign-up sheets for those intending to come to the retreat.** Please sign up now so we can jump-start the logistical details related to gathering our extended community together for spiritual renewal!

### **Next Council Meeting – March 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>**

We are looking for a new meeting site that will better accommodate our growing number of participants. Depending on site and availability, our next meeting will be either March 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>. Since the next newsletter will also be sent to you that weekend, please refer to the website for exact location and date of the March Council meeting and plan to come if possible. **You are both welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings.**

### **Pastoral Update:**

#### **Annual Meeting -- Update**

A special meeting of the Parish Council was held **Sunday, January 19 in Salem.** Ten members of Sophia Christi were present: Helen and Mary from Battle Ground, Judith and Carol from Eugene, Jim and Joy from Woodland, WA, and Leanne, Danielle, Bob and Toni from Portland.

Joy W. had previously submitted her resignation and stepped down as President, though she will remain on the Council. Danielle was elected as our new President.

The Council adopted a budget for 2014 based on projected income and expenses from last year. It also decided to meet every other month rather than once a quarter in order to better serve the needs of our growing community. The Council began looking ahead toward our annual summer outreach activities (Pride Festivals in Portland and Eugene, and the Eugene Celebration) and considered the possibility of expanding these efforts by experimenting with a booth at one of the many Farmer's markets.

The question of community enrichment and spiritual renewal was discussed. The March retreat and annual summer picnic address some of these needs, but what are the interests and needs not being met? The Council decided to solicit input from people at Masses next weekend. Look for a survey form in your pew or on your chair.

#### **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 we feature the comments of Carol, our new Treasurer:

*Blessings to one and all. Let me introduce myself. My name is Carol and I am the new Treasurer of Sophia Christi. I will be replacing Leanne who was the first treasurer and had the responsibility of setting up the SC bookkeeping system. She did a wonderful job and I will do my best to follow her lead. I am also the treasurer in another organization, The Santiam Heritage Foundation. We are restoring a 1904 Victorian house in Stayton where I live.*

*I have been involved with Sophia Christi almost since the beginning. When I first read about Toni and the Roman Catholic Women Priests - in the Catholic Sentinel no less - I decided to go and see if a woman priest would speak about some of the issues that concerned me. She did, and also covered other subjects that were completely new to me. Sophia Christi has opened my mind and my heart to love and care for others in a way that I never thought possible. I attend Sophia Christi in Eugene, but whenever possible I go to Portland as well. –Carol*

## Website

After carefully considering the high value we place on inclusivity in our community, and discussing where our boundaries lie in sharing sensitive information over the worldwide web, the Council has decided to experiment with a 'Members' Portal on our site as others have done before us. This will allow us to provide the addresses and phone numbers for home Mass locations, community picnics or other events hosted by Sophia Christi members more easily, quickly, and privately. It will allow us to post our ministry schedules online, along with names and phone numbers, so liturgical ministers can double check the schedule or get in touch with one another as needed. And this is just the beginning.

Once the portal is available we will issue a password to those who participate, or have participated, in community events. Drawing a line around what is shared publicly is a 'hot' topic these days as concerns about privacy have become increasingly important. How do we remain inclusive while also respecting privacy? What constitutes appropriate boundaries when inclusivity is a value we hold dear?

These questions have no easy answers, which is why the Portal itself is an experiment. I invite you to think about the question and to discuss it with each other online and in person. In the meantime I will work with John in creating the 'member portal' and 'password.' The password will be given to those who participate in liturgy and attend the retreat as well as to those we have not seen in a while who still consider yourselves members of the community and request access to the portal. Just send a message and let me know you are still 'with us' in spirit and would like access to the portal. Let's see where all this takes us and learn the parameters of our shared boundaries as we move forward into this unfamiliar territory. Bookmark this page [www.sophiachristi.org](http://www.sophiachristi.org) for 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. 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.**

Symbols of hope and promise help us through the darkness of 'winter' days, in whatever form that darkness takes. They also foster in us the desire to embody that hope so that we might be a light in the darkness for others. As we make our way through these last days of winter, maybe it's time to cultivate that inner light which is the spark of God within us. The candle flame is both fragile and powerful. It takes only one to bring light to a darkened room.

May Christ's light inspire you in these final days of winter,

Toni