

April 6, 2014

Blessings and peace to all,

Next weekend we begin Holy Week with a procession of palms and a choral reading of the Passion. Palm Sunday officially became "Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord" in 1970 during the liturgical revisions following the Second Vatican Council. We now generally refer to the sixth Sunday of Lent as Palm/Passion Sunday.

I remember the first time I experienced the emotional dissonance within the Palm/Passion liturgy. I had returned to the church after many years of estrangement and was eager to understand and feel at home in the revised Lenten traditions of Vatican II. It was Palm Sunday and I wasn't aware that "Passion" had been added to the day's designation. The abrupt shift in liturgical mood following the procession of palms and opening Gospel, however (read in the church Narthex) led to a precipitous plunge into Jesus' passion and death with a second Gospel reading that happened only moments later. I experienced the whole affair as discordant and unsettling. Joy and hope met tragedy head-on, and I was left feeling overwhelmed. Why did the church mush together the triumph of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem with his agony on the cross I wondered? To my mind and heart, it just didn't seem right or fair to conflate the two within 10 minutes of clock time!

As we grow older we can only hope to grow in wisdom. Usually that wisdom comes at the price of some kind of suffering. When the crowd following Jesus entered Jerusalem with him they collectively carried the hopes and expectations of their nation for the coming of the Messiah, one they believed would be King of Israel, would demonstrate God's power, vanquish the Romans and restore their supremacy as a People. They were jubilant. Triumphant. Victory was at hand. Their dreams were coming true! Yet just a few days later euphoria turned to tragedy with the betrayal of those dearly held dreams. Jesus was humiliated, tortured and executed as a criminal. Elation burst like a soap bubble exposing the emptiness of dreams and futility of hope.

Palm/Passion Sunday condenses this all-too-common human experience of 'hopes dashed' into a few short minutes of liturgical time. We undergo the cacophony of emotion that plagued Jesus' disciples those last few days of his life. And we are invited to embrace the human condition, the wisdom of suffering as a counterpoint and corrective to the triumphalism and arrogance of the ego, and to die to 'self' (with a small 'S') in order to enter the deeper and grander realm of God's Spirit as revealed in the Resurrection. This week we acknowledge and embrace the cross that transforms us into the Christ-ed people of Easter.

**Readings for Liturgies** can be found on the USCCB website at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/>.

### **Mass Schedule This Month**

**Palm/Passion Sunday**--Mass in **Portland** will be Saturday, **April 12**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. In keeping with our Lenten tradition, please bring soup, salad or a veggie dish for the potluck after Mass. Choir rehearsal begins at 4:00 and all interested singers and musicians are invited to come and participate. We will gather downstairs in the dining hall to begin our procession with palms.

**Palm/Passion Sunday**--Mass in **Eugene** will be Sunday, **April 13**, at **First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23<sup>rd</sup>**, at **4:00pm**. Plan to stay for the potluck after Mass. Bring soup, salad, or a veggie dish. If you are interested in being part of the choir as a musician or singer, please come at 3:00 for rehearsal. We will gather in the foyer of the chapel to begin our procession with palms.

**EASTER SUNDAY**--Mass in **Eugene** will be Sunday, **April 20, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 4:00pm.** Plan to stay for a delicious potluck after Mass. Bring entreés, salads, veggie dishes and desserts. If you are interested in being part of the choir as a musician or singer, please come at 3:00 for rehearsal.

**SERVICES IN BATTLE GROUND:** Contact us for location and further information.

**Mass—April 6 and 27, 10:30am.** Bring non-perishable food and hygiene items for St. Vincent de Paul as well as healthy food to share after Mass.

**Holy Thursday--April 17, 6:30.** Agape meal with Eucharist. Helen will provide the main dish. You may bring a side of vegetables, a salad or dessert. All are welcome. Helen asks you to let her know by Tuesday, April 15, that you are planning to come.

**Good Friday--April 18.** Stations of the Cross at **2:30** and at **5:30**. The Stations will spotlight stories of the women on Jesus' journey and of their sisters today. Stations will take place outside, rain or shine, so please dress for the weather.

### **Upcoming Events:**

#### **Next Council Meeting – May 3 or 4**

Please check our website for the exact date and Salem location. As we transition from one venue to another more permanent site for our meetings, we are naturally experiencing a few bumps in the road. Please check the 'News and Events' page of the website for accurate information about where and when the meeting will take place—3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> of May, and Morningside Methodist Church or Denny's.

#### **Portland Pride - 2014**

The Portland Pride Festival will be held June 14 & 15. The Sophia Christi booth has already been secured, but we will need volunteers to staff the booth on Saturday as well as Sunday. We are hoping to have a vehicle in the Parade this year to accommodate those unable to walk the entire parade route Sunday morning. If you are willing to staff the booth, or would like to plan on decorating and/or riding in the vehicle, please contact Joy L. She is in the process of organizing all aspects of our involvement in the Festival.

#### **Marriage Equality Events – Portland and Eugene**

A message from Joy W.:

*There are many vigils planned around Oregon on Tuesday, April 22 to support Marriage Equality (this is the night before the Oregon federal judge begins his deliberation on the constitutionality of the 2004 Ballot Measure 36 passed by voters). I hope you will attend the one in your community. In **Portland**: Terry Schunk Plaza, SW Third Ave and Madison, 5:30 – 6:30 PM; In **Eugene**: Eugene Federal Building, 211 E 7th Ave., 5:30 – 6:30 PM. – Joy W.*

### **Pastoral Update:**

#### **Lenten Retreat -- Wonderful Success**

The following is a reflection on last weekend's retreat at Silver Falls by Danielle, president of the Parish Council.

*On Saturday, March 29th members from all three altars of Sophia Christi gathered at Silver Falls State Park for a Lenten communal retreat. Tucked away into a towering forest and with nearby waterfalls, the setting was beautiful and allowed for some time to meander in nature. The focus of the retreat was "Listening to the Conversations of Your Heart." Between sacred music, scripture readings, spoken presentation, call and response, centering prayer, and group sharing, there was rich content to dig into and explore. We were encouraged to enter the*

*cave of our heart, a place known only to God, to become more aware of God's presence in our everyday lives. In the liturgy, all were invited to participate in a communal reconciliation ceremony. Based on the Gospel reading in which Jesus writes in the sand and calls for anyone who has not sinned to throw the first stone against an adulterer, members of Sophia Christi could have their own sins or longings erased from the sand by fellow members, followed by an embrace. The ceremony ended with general absolution. It was an especially moving ritual for me and for many members, and I also appreciated the chance to break bread with people representing each part of the whole Sophia Christi community. All in all, it was a wonderful retreat with the chance to reflect during this Lenten season and to build community. Thank you to all who participated! --Danielle*

### **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 Carol introduces two of our newest Council members, Joy and Jim:

*Joy and Jim reside in Washington where Joy raises chickens for eggs and plants a large garden every year. They will have been married 47 years this November. The two have been members of Sophia Christi for almost 7 years. Joy saw an article in the newspaper about Sophia Christi and Toni. They found the members of Sophia Christi to be very welcoming and immediately felt at home.*

*Joy and Jim attend Sophia Christi services in Portland, sometimes in Battle Ground, and also travel to Eugene when Mass falls on a different weekend from that of Portland. Since our move to Northminster they have taken responsibility for setting up the dining hall before Mass in Portland as well as for cleaning up after the potluck. They also help Toni put the sanctuary back in its original order after Mass.*

*Joy is active in several community service projects, which includes volunteering at the St. Andrew Episcopal Food Pantry one day a week. She also spends one day a week volunteering at Rose Haven, a shelter for homeless women in Portland. In addition, she has assumed responsibility for organizing Sophia Christi's booth and parade involvement for the upcoming Portland Pride Festival to be held June 14 & 15.*

*The Council thanks Joy and Jim for their ongoing commitment to the Sophia Christi Catholic Community. -- Carol*

### **Sophia Christi Considers Tithing**

At its meeting last month, the Council began considering the possibility of tithing a portion of our income on a regular basis to a cause or charitable organization aligned with our values around issues of peace and justice. We asked participants at the retreat to vote 'yes' or 'no' regarding the idea and also to provide names of suitable organizations for our planned giving. At Masses this weekend we will continue soliciting your votes and your thoughts. I know many of you volunteer your time and energy with a number of different groups, and 'service' is a value we hold in common as members of Sophia Christi. Though we already contribute food and much needed hygiene products to St. Andrew's Episcopal Food Pantry in Portland, and St. Vincent de Paul in Battle Ground, we can expand our generosity by giving a portion of our collective resources to organizations and causes we wish to support. As Pope Francis focuses Church attention on needs of the poor we can join the growing wave of concern and awareness by fostering an attitude of 'giving' here in our own small faith community. Please take time to consider where the greatest good might be done through the generosity of Sophia Christi, and offer your suggestions at Masses this weekend.

### **Website**

Watch for more information about the Member Portal of our website in the coming days. We are beginning to get in touch with those of you for whom we have contact information for permission

to use email addresses and/or phone numbers within the password protected section of our website. This access point, which we are calling the 'Member Portal' will function as our Sophia Christi Directory and will allow members to contact one another more readily. We carefully protect this information and have been cautious about providing contact information in an accessible format. With the controls available now with our new website we are able to provide both access and safety to the degree safety is possible. So please watch for an email asking whether you are willing to be listed in the password-protected online Directory within the website itself and please respond promptly.

Every month we post the current homily, announcements, reflections and updates on our site. I encourage you to check it out and send your own comments to the 'News and Events' page for posting. Bookmark this page [www.sophiachristi.org](http://www.sophiachristi.org) for easy access.

**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.**

We enter into Holy Week with all the hope and jubilation of Palm Sunday while allowing ourselves to face into the agony of Jesus' final hours in the reading of the Passion. This prepares us for Jesus' washing his disciples' feet on Holy Thursday, his requirement they continue his work of service once he's gone, his gift of himself in the Eucharist inaugurated at that last Passover celebrated with family and friends, and the somber defeat of his ministry on the cross on Good Friday. At times these readings and rituals seem like mere reminders meant to evoke a response grown cold through years of re-telling. When we don't connect the dots, when we can't appreciate the link between modern-day persecution and torture of innocent people with the agony of Jesus leading up to his death, when we don't recognize the 'via dolorosa' (way of suffering/grief) and its transformative power in our own lives and the lives of all around us, then the events of Holy Week can seem archaic and passé. The challenge of Holy Week is to enter the story and to recognize it as 'our' story. It is a story of deep love, suffering and ultimate sacrifice in service of the incredible mystery of Divinity resting at the heart of all known Creation, and in the heart of each and every one of us. Jesus the great Lover of God and humanity, the Revealer of 'the Way of Life on earth, the Truth about that Life, and LIFE itself, is standing in for us, representing us, showing us 'the Way' in this universal story. We live this week with him and learn. We suffer with him and learn. All roads lead first through suffering before they end, ultimately, in the splendor of resurrection.

Wishing you a Holy Week of enlightenment and blessing,

Toni