

September 7, 2014

End of Summer Blessings,

For me, saying goodbye to summer means saying goodbye to the sweet, juicy Bartlett pears from the tree in my back yard. I have a special relationship with that tree and its abundant yearly harvest, but this is the first year I've managed to preserve, use or give away nearly all the pears of the season. It has been quite a feat of daily attentiveness and creativity, but more than that, it has been a labor of love and respect for the tree and its fruit that has driven me. The tree shares its home with me and provides the sheer, undeserved gift of its incredible productivity year after year while asking nothing in return but a little pruning here and there. It is my great privilege to live in its shadow and observe the many creatures it attends and nourishes while simply being itself, without effort or pretense, and remaining rooted where it stands season after season. I have been a distracted student of this dear teacher for most of these last 13 years but this year has been different. This year, as I cut baskets and baskets of pears into pieces to make pear sauce, or worked the Fruit Picker basket between branches to snag the largest pears from the highest branches I could reach, that tree became a vehicle of grace. Grace is that generous, free and completely undeserved gift that just falls out of the sky at our feet for our benefit, and all that's required is for us to receive.

The pear tree has been a visible hand of God in my life this summer, and I have learned something about grace from its continuous release of fruit that theological concepts alone can't provide. Nature is one of God's many languages, I think, and through it God speaks to us in ways the human brain can most readily understand. The tree in my yard, for example, produces fruit for anyone and everyone just as God sends sun and rain on the just and the unjust alike (Mt 5:45). The yellow jackets and blue jays are as welcome at this feast of plenty as am I. God's love is that extravagant—giving me joy and pleasure in a way specific to me, while being there and available to anyone and everyone stopping by in some way specific to them. I don't experience this free gift as "love" in the way I understand love, but I know abundant generosity when I see it and have felt the kiss of grace and love this summer in the seemingly endless supply of pears and berries that simply appeared with the season. And though I will miss the fresh pears as summer turns to fall, I will be reminded of God's grace (and my own diligence) as I enjoy the preserved harvest this winter. Different grace-receptors will be called for then, receptors activated only in the dark and nourished by the sweetness of God's summer voice.

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

Mass Schedule This Month

Mass in **Portland** will be Saturday, **September 13**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. Potluck follows. Please bring your favorite entrees, vegetable dishes, salads and desserts in the spirit of our 7th birthday celebration. Depending on temperature, we will either be upstairs in the sanctuary or

downstairs in the dining room. Choir rehearsal begins at 4:00 and all interested singers and musicians are invited to come and participate.

Mass in **Eugene** will be Sunday, **September 14, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd, at 4:00pm.** A potluck follows Mass. Please bring your favorite dish to share at the potluck afterwards: entrées, veggies, salads, and desserts. If you are interested in being part of the choir as a musician or singer, please come at 3:00 for rehearsal.

Mass in **Battle Ground** will be Sunday **September 14 and 28 at 10:30am.** Bring non-perishable food and hygiene items for St. Vincent de Paul as well as healthy food to share after Mass.

Upcoming Events:

Fall Events:

❖ **Annual Meeting – November 2, 2-4pm**

Our Annual Meeting will be held at Ike Box Coffee shop in Salem, OR. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. We will elect officers and set the budget for 2015.

Pastoral Update:

Introducing our new Parish Council President—Mitch Moore

I am excited to serve the Sophia Christi community on the Parish Council as Interim President. The idea of being “interim” is to fill in for the wonderful departing President Danielle Bastien until the call of Spirit can be discerned for the role. I relish the opportunity to work with Toni and the rest of the Council and with all of you in the community. I began attending Mass at SC in Eugene in 2008, and have been a bit sporadic in attendance (but not in spirit) since then. I’ve bounced around a bit with a couple of moves, as well as singing in an LGBTQ chorus that rehearses on Sunday afternoons. I moved to Salem from Eugene, and have been attending the Mass in Portland. The Eucharistic table at SC feels like home to me. I’m so glad to be part of it, and I look forward to working with and getting to know more community members.

—Mitch Moore

Summary of September Parish Council Meeting

We met Saturday, September 6, prior to the picnic at Carol’s. There were only five of us there, and we were efficient, as well as SO comfortable on Carol’s deck overlooking the countryside. We discussed a slight increase in our rent in Eugene, and ways to get more financial information to our community. The Annual Meeting will be November 2, and we’re hoping to have a couple of new Parish Council members to elect. Nomination forms will be handed out at September and October Masses--please consider joining us! --Judith Manning, Council Secretary

Fun and Relaxing 3rd Annual Picnic

About 20 of us gathered at Carol and Gary's gorgeous home in the hills near Stayton. We talked and laughed and ate abundant delicious food. Some took a walk, but most of us relaxed in lawn chairs and talked about TV and movies, and everything else under the sun (literally). About half of us were from Eugene and half from Portland. --Judith

Eugene Pride a Success

This year's Gay Pride Celebration went great! Weather was warm with a cool breeze. Dorothy set up an attractive, colorful booth. Unlike last year, we had a site right on the main path. This brought more passers by and more people stopping. We had some wonderful conversations. Many people showed great interest in Sophia Christi and expressed their intention to attend. The next day we had 2 new people come to our service who had talked with us at the booth! --Kathy Pekarsky

Website

The "member portal" has launched! The password was distributed to members at our 7th anniversary celebrations last month and will be available at Masses next week. Liturgical ministry schedules, Council minutes and various other in-house information can be found in this section of the website.

The website continues to grow as new information is added every month. This includes the current homily and information about upcoming events. I encourage you to check it out and send your own comments to the 'News and Events' page for posting. Please bookmark this page www.sophiachristi.org for easy access.

Newsletter Update

Despite fervent attempts to load the current newsletter into our new format and email delivery system, technology has bested my skills once again. Therefore you are receiving this newsletter in the style you and I have become accustomed to over the last seven years. Perhaps next month I will have learned enough about the mailchimp software to use the new platform, until then please enjoy this low-tech version once again.

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, the sacrament 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.**

Our readings next weekend focus our attention on the cross, which may seem pretty

odd this time of year. The reason for this has to do with history. September 14 is the day we commemorate both the finding of the “true cross” by St. Helen (mother of Emperor Constantine) during a pilgrimage she made to Jerusalem in the year 326, and the consecration of the Basilica she and Constantine ordered (the Church of the Holy Sepulchre) on that site 9 years later in 335. September 14 is one of the twelve great feasts in the Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine Catholic Churches. In Roman Catholic practice, readings for the Feast day take precedence when September 14 falls on a Sunday. So, instead of celebrating the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time next weekend, we will celebrate The Exaltation of the Cross, which is alternately called the Triumph of the Cross. We also shift from green to red liturgical colors for that one weekend as well. I imagine you all wanted to know this piece of historical information!

Apart from historical context, whether or not Constantine’s mother actually found the cross on which Jesus was crucified is likely immaterial to most of you reading this newsletter. Even less meaningful, perhaps, is the dedication of a Basilica on that site 1,680 years ago. But we are a historically sensitive people, with traditions and practices rooted in antiquity as our readings each week verify. There is much to be said for tradition, even as there is much to be said for innovation. We need our roots to keep us anchored in good soil, otherwise we would be deprived of the water and nutrients that give us life. We also need the great sky in which to grow our branches, and the wings of the world for pollination of the fruit to seed an ongoing harvest. Roots and wings, tradition and innovation—both the secular and the sacred rely on these for growth and stability. Lessons of the cross and the pear tree intersect in pragmatic and mysterious ways. Contemplating these mysteries we enter the realm and language of God.

May you enjoy a rich and abundant harvest,

Toni