

October 5, 2014

Fall greetings to all of you,

About three weeks ago I noticed a small visitor napping under the Golden Rain tree in my front yard. The sandy-furred kitty took no interest in my presence at first and I speculated that the warmth of the sun and protection of the fence provided comfort and safety for his mid-day rest. I assumed he was a neighbor's cat, but when I realized he was still hanging out in my yard three days later I became concerned. He seemed very thin, maybe elderly, or maybe malnourished. A neighbor said she had tried to feed him and he wouldn't eat. A friend warned: "if you feed him, he's yours!" But he looked hungry! Then he started coming toward me as I walked across the yard, tentatively at first, unsure. I resisted the impulse to feed him, to offer the hand of care and comfort he seemed to crave. I questioned my resistance at the same time wanting to honor a decision I'd made a few years before not to take on responsibility for another animal. But the thing is—this cat wasn't going anywhere! It was as though he had found his place in the world and he wasn't leaving! But I was leaving. In less than a week I had plans to be gone for 10 days. What to do?

As I considered my options regarding the small creature in my yard I began to wonder what its purpose in my life might be. As a spiritual director I've been trained to ask "where is God in this circumstance, in this experience? What is the invitation? What is the blessing?" I remembered Jesus' words: "what you do for the least of my brothers and sisters you do for me"—which may seem a stretch until you consider the sentiments of St. Francis of Assisi (whose feast we celebrated this weekend) who saw all of creation as his brothers and sisters. Francis' familial relationship with furry and feathered beings great and small still inspires parishes around the country to bless animals on his feast-day. Perhaps you enjoyed a service with animals this weekend yourself!

Well, a few days went by as I continued to observe the furry creature under my tree. However much I ignored the cat it wouldn't go away. Though I will never know what brought this kitty to my doorstep, he had clearly taken up residence. This fact seemed pretty clear to me and to my neighbors. It seemed like one of those mysterious "God things" you just finally have to accept while respecting your own needs as you decide how to proceed. I talked to the neighbors. Most have pets. All of us care about animals. One brought a bag of food and agreed to feed the cat for the 10 days I would be gone. When I returned home from that trip I discovered a 25-pound bag of cat food on the front porch, two food bowls and a gallon jug of water! It made me smile. A few days later parents of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grader across the street enthusiastically agreed to let their daughter care for kitty's needs on weekends I'm not home. This will be her first responsibility outside the home and they were immediately excited about her having this opportunity. So we seem to have a community cat! One neighbor suggested we call him C.C. (for Community Cat, of course). He still lives in my yard so now I'm brainstorming winter accommodations. But aren't God's ways interesting!? May St. Francis bless the kitty who instigated this neighborly adventure as well as all our feathered, finned and furry brothers and sisters, great and small.

**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, **October 11**, 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. Choir rehearsal begins at 4:00 and all interested singers and musicians are invited to come and participate.

Mass in **Eugene** will be Sunday, **October 12**, at **First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23<sup>rd</sup>**, at **4:00pm**. A potluck follows Mass. Please bring your favorite dish to share at the potluck afterwards: entrees, 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 **October 5 and 26** 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. Agenda for the meeting will be posted in the member portal of the website several days before the November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Pastoral Update:**

#### **A Message from the Parish Council**

Each month a member of the Parish Council is asked to write a short piece for the newsletter. This month we feature the comments of Leanne Kerner, our former Treasurer:

*My initial involvement with Sophia Christi began as a result of my unequivocal support of women's ordination; when Roman Catholic Women Priests came into view I was thrilled and inspired. I longed to contribute in some way to the inclusive church promised by this breakthrough.*

*I joined the initial Sophia Christi leadership team—now the Parish Council—in order to help jump-start our formation into a unique community where all are welcome. Collaborating with others in a small group has taken a modest amount of time (quarterly meetings), but has created a good amount of “glue” to the organization.*

*Regular attendance is a sometimes-overlooked contribution. I'm there! (Well, except when I was out of the country last month.) We strengthen our community bonds*

*at the Eucharistic (and potluck!) tables. Our small community provides opportunities for getting to know and be known perhaps more easily than in larger churches.*

*I also served several years as a musician. I love to sing and it enhances our liturgies. Leading singing encourages the assembly to sing out, providing an enhanced emotional component to our worship.*

*And while Sophia Christi is not my primary place of worship, I contribute financially here as well in order to build Sophia's financial viability. I look forward to the day when Sophia Christi can in turn contribute a portion of its finances to needy organizations in the community.*

*Everything I've contributed to Sophia Christi has come back to me in dividends of spiritual health, rewarding friendships and a sense of belonging to a community of shared values. I call that a pretty healthy return! --Leanne Kerner*

### **Nominations for Parish Council**

The Council wants to increase its membership next year to include more voices and become even more representative of our three geographic areas. Do you have a vision for Sophia Christi? Are there leadership, organizational or technical skills you would like to share? Please consider your own skills and interests as well as those of others in S.C. and take a step toward building community by nominating yourself or someone else for a position on the Council. We will continue accepting applications at Masses next weekend (as well as via email through October) from the community at large. New members and officers will be elected at our annual meeting in Salem (see above for time and location of the Annual Meeting) on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. If you have questions or would like more information please contact Toni or one of the current Council members. Contact information for all Council members can be found in the member portal.

### **Website**

Please remember you can access Liturgical ministry schedules, Council minutes and various other in-house information inside the "member portal" of the website. The password was first made available at our anniversary Masses in August, and can now be found in the small envelope attached to your nametag. If you've lost the envelope or have trouble with the website or password please let me know. I will do all I can to make this a viable communication tool for the entire community.

New information is added to the website 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](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, 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.**

As I think of my initial response to the small, fragile cat in my yard I see both resistance to forming a connection and an instant compassionate urge to provide food and shelter. His scrawny frame evoked a tender protectiveness that would eventually override my desire to not become attached, not get involved and not further complicate my life. Life is about investing time and energy in what matters to us, what we value and hold dear. Being true to ourselves—doing what we must do in response to conscience and personal integrity—matters greatly. Feeding the hungry matters. Providing homes for the homeless matters. Taking care of the vulnerable among us is what family, community and even society and government are ultimately about. We live in a messy, chaotic world of competing perspectives, beliefs, values and needs, but some things are basic. The need for food and water are basic to all life on earth, so we shouldn't be surprised that so much of Scripture focuses on food. Our readings next weekend begin with God's promise of a banquet of rich food and fine wine for all people, moves to Paul's words of gratitude to the Philippians with the phrase "whether on a full stomach or an empty stomach", then ends with a wedding feast in Matthew's Gospel. Food is the symbol of God's tenderness and care for the Israelites, God's ongoing involvement in their lives. It is a symbol of Paul's single-hearted devotion to Christ as well as a sign of the mutual investment of time and energy between Paul and his beloved Philippians. Food appears in Jesus parable of the ruler who prepares a feast for his son's wedding and acts as a mirror for what matters and doesn't matter to the invited guests who brush aside the invitation as though it, and the ruler, have no value. What feeds you and what do you feed? How is God working in your life? Where is the invitation? What is the blessing?

May this season of Fall feed your soul,

Toni