

January 6, 2015

A joyous New Year and blessed Epiphany to all of you,

As the Christmas “season” gives way to plans and resolutions for a new year, pause with me and allow the spiritual significance of these past few weeks to inform a new perspective. The “Light of the World” re-entered human consciousness on a grand scale as billions of us celebrated the birth of Jesus less than two weeks ago. For over a month choral music, crèche displays, decorated houses, shopping malls and evergreens formed the backdrop of our common social experience. In the days immediately preceding Christmas a greater sense of generosity, goodwill and kindness seemed evident everywhere I went. The “Light of the World” seemed to have entered the collective consciousness in ways both noticeable and subtle. The Christmas Spirit was alive! Though less evident now, as we lurch forward into 2015 and the busy routines that characterize modern life, that Light continues to enlighten and encourage those of us willing to watch for its appearance and follow its lead. It is active within us as individuals and as a people, urging us toward generous acts of kindness, toward openness and acceptance of the “other,” toward awareness and support for the common good, and toward a dynamic justice that begets true peace.

Sunday, January 4th, the Church calendar called us to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany. Though largely ignored in the U.S., the 12th Day of Christmas focuses attention on the Magi (also called wise men or astrologers) from the East who followed a star as it led them to the infant Jesus. When King Herod heard of this newborn “king of the Jews” he worried the child might threaten his own position of power. He summoned the Magi and asked for information about the child’s whereabouts, feigning a desire to honor this new king. The story contrasts the darkness embedded in ego-driven designs for power with the light that guides humble seekers to the cradle of Truth, Goodness and Love. It highlights an intrinsic human ability to perceive God’s presence everywhere and in everything—in planetary phenomena, in dreams and intuitions, as well as in other human beings.

It is instructive to recognize that the Magi are not Jews. From the very beginning Jesus reached beyond the boundaries of religion and tribe to touch the minds and hearts of diverse peoples. And the Magi returned to their ‘own country’. They did not become Jews. They did not become disciples or followers of Jesus. They went ‘Home by another way.’ Regardless of cultural norms or religious beliefs, God is available to everyone. And ‘the heart that sees rightly’ is a heart open to an epiphany of Divine expression and presence any moment, any place—everywhere.

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, **January 10**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. Potluck follows. Please bring your favorite New Year entreés, vegetable dishes, salads and desserts. 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 11, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd, at 4:00pm.** A potluck follows Mass. Please bring your favorite New Year 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.

Masses in **Battle Ground** will be Saturday **January 4 and 25 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:

Winter Events:

❖ **Parish Council Meeting, January 18, 2015, Ike Box Coffee Shop, 299 Cottage St. NE, Salem, 2-4pm**

Please note that the next meeting of the Parish Council is coming up in just two weeks. If you have ideas or suggestions, or would like to be more involved in planning or implementing Sophia Christi activities, please consider coming to Salem on the 18th. We carpool from Battle Ground, Portland and Eugene, and you are always welcome to ride along! Just let one of the Council members know you are interested and we will coordinate travel details.

Pastoral Update:

Christmas Eve in Eugene

Twenty-four of us gathered at the home of Dianne and Amanda for our 4th Annual Christmas Eve Mass in Eugene. Since that time many have commented about the deeper sense of connection they experienced this year. At the homily we shared personal stories and insights while reflecting on the birth of Jesus as a mirror of who we are—humanly divine beings created out of the only essence that exists in the universe, the essence of God. Like Jesus we, too, can come to know who we are—divine beings who are fully human—and we can learn to live humbly while knowing both the limitations of our humanity and the all-inclusive Oneness, mercy and vast loving nature of our divinity. Christmas Eve ended with conversation, hot apple cider, and yummy seasonal treats.

Website

We are still seeking photos for the 'member portal.' You can either send them as an email attachment or bring photos to Mass so they can be scanned and returned to you. We are always careful to insure privacy for community members who do not want their pictures posted for the world to see. The non-public 'member portal' provides space for in-house sharing of sensitive information as well as for ongoing enjoyment of Sophia Christi's history through the creation of a photo archive. If you are interested in helping

with this creative project please let me know. Just a reminder: our web address is www.sophiachristi.org.

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, reconciliation or anointing, home Masses, weddings, funerals, memorial services or other pastoral care needs.

Food for the St. Andrew Episcopal Food Pantry

The St. Andrew Food Pantry continues in operation, though end-of-year changes may affect future operations. We will collect food and personal hygiene items again this month at our Masses. Watch the February newsletter for more details. **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.**

When we come together next weekend to celebrate the Baptism of Jesus we will have reached the traditional end of the Christmas season. We transition quickly from Jesus' birth to his baptism, which marks the beginning of his ministry. Just five weeks later Lent will begin (Ash Wednesday is February 18th).

If we allow Jesus' birth to mirror for us the Divine/human nature we all possess, then his baptism takes us one step further in deepening that radical awareness. As Richard Rohr puts it, God is our DNA. There is no such thing as "adoption" into the family of God; we are all beloved daughters and sons. All of us have God's DNA.

This year will provide many opportunities to relegate others to the status of "enemy." There will be no lack of controversy and plenty of occasions to vilify and denigrate other human beings. As tempting as this might be, I wonder what might happen if we kept in the forefront of our minds the Divine DNA we all share? The human experience is challenging for all of us. The body has its own needs, which must be met for survival, and the structure of the brain influences our psychology and how we manage to process information. Culture, language, geography and education affect what we can and cannot see. We all navigate the waters of human experience as best we can. We make mistakes and hurt ourselves, and others, along the way. As "children" of God, we learn and grow through it all. But at our core we are divine beings with a divine destiny—all of us. How might we live differently on this earth, I wonder, if we were all able to know and to accept this truth about our individual and collective identity?

Have a blessed year,

Toni