

February 1, 2015

Mid-winter greetings to all of you,

During the last two Sundays of January and first three of February this year we take a collective breath before plunging into the season of Lent on Feb. 18. Mark's Gospel moves quickly, spanning the time between Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan, and the beginning of his ministry, in just six short verses. In some way the relative speed of this narrative seems to echo the quickened pace of modern life. Yet in our first reading next Sunday Job complains about this same experience when he says: "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; my life is as ephemeral as breath." The swift passage of time was brought home to me last week as I accompanied a dear friend through the last days of her life. She and I met in college nearly 50 years ago. We grew up together, became family for each other, and learned to navigate the inevitable challenges wrought by illness and shifting priorities over the course of five decades. This is what the heart does, it seems, when it gives itself to love—it willingly launches into a lifetime's journey. Who knows why we throw an anchor into the sea of life in the unique ways that we do? But we do it nonetheless. Where the journey often takes us is deeper and deeper into questions without answers. There, in the depths of unknowing and silence, we touch the heart of God. Faith is born in silence. Faith is not about words, not about beliefs. It doesn't rest on dogma, isn't dependent on healings and miracles. It has its origin in wonder and awe, in questions without answers. The Book of Job wrestles with some of these perennial questions. Our first reading this month is taken from there. In the end it is Job's faith, not his friends' self-righteous and self-assured beliefs that finds favor with God.

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

### **Mass Schedule This Month**

Mass in **Eugene** will be Sunday, **February 8, 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 **Portland** will be Saturday, **February 14, at Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way at 5:00pm**. Potluck follows. Please bring your favorite entrees, vegetable dishes, salads and desserts. Choir rehearsal begins at 4:00 and all interested singers and musicians are invited to come and participate.

Masses in **Battle Ground** will be Saturday **February 1<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> 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:

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

Due to unforeseen family events and schedule challenges the Council meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> needed to be postponed. We are hoping to set a new date in March, so watch the website and the March newsletter for an update.

## Pastoral Update:

### Social Justice Survey Results

In November and December the Parish Council conducted a survey at Masses in all three locations to learn about member involvement in Social Justice ministries. You were asked to provide names of organizations you already support and whether you favor the idea of donating a percentage of your contributions to Sophia Christi each month to a social justice organization that shares our values involving care for the poor.

A total of 21 surveys were completed—5 from Battle Ground, 6 from Portland and 10 from Eugene. Those who responded are involved in and/or financially support a vast array of wonderful endeavors—from local food banks to international aid groups, and from prison reform to a small relief nursery. All 21 individuals favored giving a portion of our monthly donations to a social justice organization serving the poor.

Two potential recipients appeared on the list of compiled results from each of our three locations. These were St. Vincent DePaul and Habitat for Humanity.

### Website

Almost every month I receive at least one email requesting more information about Sophia Christi from someone who discovered us through the Internet. Some people just stumble across our website while surfing. Others find their way because a friend or acquaintance referred them to the site. In any case, our web presence offers support and hope to people we may never hear from, let alone ever meet. Remember the web address and visit some time. [www.sophiachristi.org](http://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.

### St. Andrew Episcopal Food Pantry—and Beyond...

With the retirement of long-time Director, Kathleen Greene, the St. Andrew Food Pantry is currently in transition with a possibility of closure. Uncertain leadership and organizational disruption led Sophia Christi volunteers at the Pantry to discontinue their participation the end of December. Donations of food and personal hygiene items at January Masses were distributed to other organizations Sophia Christi members support as follows: 1) personal hygiene contributions were taken to **Rose Haven** in downtown Portland. Rose Haven serves women and children of all ages, many of whom have been traumatized by abuse and homelessness. It offers advocacy, medical

services, classes, groups, free clothing and hygiene products to its guests; and 2) food contributions were taken to **Catholic Community Services** of Lane County whose mission, like that of St. Vincent DePaul, is to serve people in greatest need by providing direct assistance on the basis of whatever is needed “right now”. They offer housing and energy assistance as well as a food pantry in both Eugene and Springfield.

### **Current Need...**

Catholic Community Services is doing a winter clothing drive for homeless and low-income families until Feb 16. They are looking for winter coats, socks, gloves, hats, blankets and shoes. If you have any of these items and would like to donate them, please bring them to Masses in Eugene this month.

### **Now...Beyond the Food Pantry...**

As Sophia Christi ends its partnership with St. Andrew Episcopal Food Pantry we will begin to implement a program of financial support for those most in need through organizations serving the poor in our various communities. We have identified possible places to begin through our Social Justice Survey (results as indicated above). At its next meeting the Council will discuss the possibility of rotating contributions each month or each quarter of this year between the three locations of SVdP and Habitat. It will also discuss what percentage of our Mass contributions to donate, and whether to make these donations on a monthly or quarterly basis. The Council would love to hear your thoughts about all of these matters, so please feel free to contact me or one of the Council members with your ideas. You can find email addresses and phone numbers for everyone on the Council in the Member Portal of the website.

“It is only with the heart that one can see rightly,” says the fox in *The Little Prince*. “What is essential is invisible to the eye.” Despite Job’s sadness and despair, his faith enabled him to remain present and open while moving through darkness at the heart of mystery. He was somehow able to see and accept an overarching “purpose” in the grand scheme of human life that includes suffering. At the end he is finally able to say: “I have dealt with great things that I do not understand; things beyond me that I cannot know. I had heard of You [God] by word of mouth, but now I have my own experience of You. Therefore I distance myself from everything I’ve said before, and fall to my knees in humility before You.” That posture seems a proper stance in these days before the beginning of Lent. Donning a robe of humility before all the questions surrounding life’s mysteries is a wise approach to Lent. All our presumptuous answers to these stubborn questions are mere childish attempts to reduce Great Mystery to a footnote so we can bypass them without a second glance. Ultimately this avails us nothing. We are invited to bow before Mystery and enter the realm of silence. This is where God instructs the faith-full in the ways of Wisdom.

Blessings and peace,

Toni