

March 1, 2015

Dear community and readers beyond our porous walls,

It is Lent. For two weeks now Christians have been traveling this season with an eye toward Holy Week, Triduum and Easter. As we follow the Gospel readings through Lent they tell us about Jesus' ministry. It begins in the desert where he is tempted by the kinds of heady power, wealth and honor the world has to offer. He is tempted to render the very 'rock' of the earth into something that will merely satisfy his physical hunger. But Jesus wants more than physical satisfaction. He wants to serve the God who called him 'beloved son' on the banks of the Jordan, the God he calls papa. Only God can satisfy the hungers of his soul, so he says no to superficial satisfaction and places his foot firmly on the prophetic path of healing, forgiving and feeding the poor and the outcast. The angels immediately tend to his needs.

His clear decision to follow the path of service places him in the realm of the Holy. This is reaffirmed on the mountain of transfiguration where his role as liberator and his mission of revealing the presence of God to those able and willing to see are both highlighted before his three mesmerized disciples. They witness the unveiling of his identity—his connection with Moses and Elijah, the integrity of his radiant soul, and his absolute oneness with God.

Our Gospel reading next Sunday follows the Transfiguration by one week and begins in the courtyard of the Temple. Jesus charges into that courtyard with a whip made of cords, chasing away the oxen, sheep and merchants, spilling the coins of the money changers and turning over their tables. "Stop making my father's house a marketplace," he yells. Bringing an awareness of God's presence as well as sensitivity to God's commandments to the threshold of the Temple challenges a status quo that has given priority to rules and laws that serve those very things Jesus rejected out there in the desert—power, status, greed—the satisfaction of purely material desires. It is the prophet who calls attention to upside down priorities. It is the prophet who reminds us that we are all living in God's house and that our egos are getting in the way of seeing what really matters—that the poor are fed, that widows and orphans, single mothers with children, the homeless and jobless, the mentally ill, prisoners and powerless are truly and justly cared for within this global 'house of God' in which we live.

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, **March 8, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd, at 4:00pm**. A potluck follows Mass. Please bring simple, nutritious food to share at the potluck afterwards: soup, veggies and salads in keeping with Lent. 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, **March 14, at Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way at 5:00pm**. Please bring simple, nutritious food to share at the potluck afterwards: soup, veggies and salads in keeping with Lent. 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 **March 1st and 22nd** 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:

Spring Events:

❖ **Parish Council Meeting, March 22, Ike Box Coffee Shop, 299 Cottage St. NE, Salem, 2-4pm**

At this meeting the Council will discuss recommendations from Sophia Christi members about where to direct a percentage of monthly contributions, what that percentage will be, and whether to make these donations on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis.

Pastoral Update:

Social Justice Outreach

For the last seven years Sophia Christi has collected food and personal hygiene products for some of the poorest of the poor in North Portland. Our donations have served countless individuals and families through the St. Andrew Episcopal Food Pantry where members of our community also volunteered hours of their time each month. Last month I reported that significant changes at the Pantry led to a re-evaluation of our partnership and a decision to shift our Social Justice focus toward direct financial support of charitable organizations aligned with our values.

At the upcoming Council meeting members will decide where and how to begin directing a portion of our income each month to one or more of these organizations. We hope to create a new partnership that will serve the poorest in our community in ways that go beyond what we have been able to do in the past. Watch this newsletter for continuing developments as we search for ways to pool our resources to serve the overwhelming needs of the poor in our region.

Website

Our web presence continues to be a source of outreach, support and encouragement to people we may never hear from or meet. If you would like to be part of this outreach effort and have either ideas or skills that could enhance our online offerings, please consider getting involved in this project. For those of you not yet familiar with the website, have a look and give your feedback through the site itself or by simply responding to this email. And remember the 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.

How do we who walk this Lenten path and become the kind of Christians who are actually apprenticing ourselves to the Teacher, Jesus, accepting his guidance in the

marketplace, in the courtyard of the Temple and in the large extended world of the 'Father's House'? Liberation Theology was intended to raise our awareness of Scripture's focus on freeing the captives, feeding the hungry and ending oppression of the weak and vulnerable members of society. It attempted to open our ears to "the cries of the poor" and motivate Jesus' followers to read the Gospels with eyes re-calibrated to his ministry as a template for solidarity with the outcasts of our world today.

It might be said that an underlying invitation within liberation theology is to see the Earth as God's holy temple and to recognize that what we do to each other, personally and collectively, matters greatly in the overall scheme of things. All peoples of the earth live within this Temple. All people and all things, including rocks in the desert, are holy. Within this Temple we often buy, sell and sacrifice not only the works of our hands but the health and lives of others whose choices are often tragically limited or even non-existent. We even sell our own lives short by focusing on physical world dreams to the detriment and sometimes exclusion of spiritual growth and insight. We have choices to make about whether to continue selling and trading, buying and sacrificing, stealing and oppressing other lives and life forms for power or profit here in God's Temple. Depending on our choices we either learn to follow Jesus or we don't. We can speak our claim to discipleship without actually following Jesus all the way to Good Friday, but where is the spiritual gift in that choice?

If we were to speak in the language of Moses and all the other prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, we might say that God has God's eyes on us. How many times did the prophets of old command the people to care for the widow and orphan, give the fields a break every seven years and redistribute the wealth? How are we doing with these societal commandments? Where will we allow the disciplines and questions of Lent to take us this year?

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Blessings and peace this holy season,

Toni