

March 29, 2015

A blessed Holy Week to all of you,

The other day I was talking with a photographer I've known for many years. He told me about one of the flowering shrubs in his yard that is always in full bloom on the date of his wedding anniversary in May. His practice has been to take a family photo on his anniversary each year using those glorious flowers as background. It's his way of marking the growth of his family and the joy of his marriage. This year, though, the bush has already bloomed—six weeks early! It has been an interesting invitation to see change as an opportunity for creativity, he said, and to release disappointment in favor of adapting 'tradition' to changing circumstances.

His experience and response led me to think about the Church and its many traditions. These traditions are sacred to the extent they lead us into the heart of God and help us encounter the Divine in and through our lived reality. Their role is to assist us in opening ourselves to what is unfamiliar and unexpected. As Isaiah tells us (55:8-9) "God's ways are not our ways" so perceiving the Divine requires openness to the unknown. Sadly, our traditions often soothe our anxieties by offering numbing routine rather than fostering our ability to be open, aware and vulnerable. In a chaotic and often dangerous world, we gravitate toward safety, predictability and consistency. We depend on our plants to flower when they should! The 40 days of Lent, culminating in Holy Week, offsets life's routine so we can hear the 'still small voice' and feel the subtle movements of Spirit within our own experiences and in the people and events around us. We are invited into the heart of life's greatest mysteries—it's purpose, innocent suffering, brutality, death, what happens after death—to have our senses opened to the God hidden within it all. We are encouraged to allow ourselves to be transformed.

This week of our liturgical year—Palm Sunday through our 'High Holy Days' and Easter—is a week that begins with apparent triumph and adulation followed immediately by betrayal, humiliation, torture and agony. It is a week of paradox and mystery that highlights the spiritual journey of every soul, both in what the ego seeks (success, fame, praise and admiration) and in what it does everything in its power to avoid (death in all its physical and psychological forms). In the midst of our passage through life God reaches out to wake us from the allure of superficial gratifications so that we might taste the deeper reality of who we are. That is the transformative experience our Holy Week traditions point toward and invite us to engage.

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

Mass Schedule This Month

EASTER SUNDAY--Mass in Eugene will be Sunday, **April 5, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd, at 4:00pm**. Plan to stay for a delicious potluck after Mass. Bring entrées, salads, veggie dishes and desserts. If you are interested in being part of the choir as a musician or singer, please come at 3:00 for rehearsal.

Saturday Mass in Eugene will be Sunday, **April 12, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd, at 4:00pm**. A potluck follows Mass. Please bring entrées, salads, veggie dishes and desserts to share at the potluck afterwards. If you are interested in being part of the choir as a musician or singer, please come at 3:00 for rehearsal.

Sunday Mass in Portland will be Saturday, **April 11**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. Please bring entrees, salads, veggie dishes and desserts for a delicious potluck meal. Choir rehearsal begins at 4:00 and all interested singers and musicians are invited to come and participate.

SERVICES IN BATTLE GROUND: Contact us for location and further information.

- **Holy Thursday--April 2, 6:30.** Agape meal with Eucharist. Helen will provide the main dish. You may bring a side of vegetables, a salad or dessert. All are welcome. Helen asks you to let her know by Tuesday, April 15, that you are planning to come.
- **Easter Mass—April 5, 10:30am.** Bring non-perishable food and hygiene items for St. Vincent de Paul as well as healthy food to share after Mass.
- **Sunday Mass—April 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:

Spring Event:

- ❖ **Parish Council Meeting, May 31, Ike Box Coffee Shop, 299 Cottage St. NE, Salem, 2-4pm**

If you have items for the Council agenda you can send them to me or to Mitch, our Council president.

Summer Outreach Events:

- ❖ **Portland PRIDE Parade, June 21. More details to follow.**
- ❖ **Eugene PRIDE Booth, August 8, Alton Baker Park**
- ❖ **Eugene Celebration Booth, Downtown, August 22 & 23**

Pastoral Update:

Report—Parish Council Meeting

Seven members of the Council gathered in Salem for the Parish Council meeting last Sunday (March 22) while three additional members joined the conversation via Conference Call from Battle Ground. The focus of discussion centered on Sophia Christi's social justice commitment to the larger community. In ending our ministry partnership with St. Andrew Episcopal Food Pantry (see February newsletter for details) we have been looking for ways to extend our support to other agencies and/or organizations that serve the poor and marginalized. Numerous possibilities were generated through our survey of Sophia Christi members last fall. With this information in hand the Council looked at our overall financial picture. **It then created a new and exciting vision of mission and a plan for carrying out that vision. Here, in essence, is the upshot of that discussion.**

Finances—A thorough look at our financial history revealed that prior to incorporation as a religious nonprofit in 2011 we relied heavily on the generosity of individuals and churches in Eugene and Portland to support a growing (but constantly fluctuating) attendance at Masses and extreme variations in donations each month. Until we initiated our first request for pledges in 2012 we had no way of projecting our

income each month and couldn't create a realistic budget. Contributions over and above our expenses were placed in a fund for the unforeseeable needs of our pioneering communal venture. In meeting requirements for incorporation as an Oregon nonprofit the planning team created our first three-year budget. It included line items for ongoing expense categories and the addition of a category for 'pastor stipend'.

With its decision to focus not only on 'outreach' but on social justice as a 'Mission' of Sophia Christi, the Council unanimously decided last Sunday to add 'Mission' as a new line item in the 2016 budget. You will be hearing more about this at Masses in the months ahead.

Mission and Ministry Partners—In looking at the results of last fall's survey the Council found that Sophia Christi members are helping to support a huge variety of outreach efforts that address the needs of the poor on a local, national and international scale. The scale of concern and engagement with issues of justice is heartwarming and impressive. **The Council discussed the practicalities of Sophia Christi using its collective 'power' to serve people in our own region who are living on the margins.** We realized that our financial contributions could make a real difference for some of the organizations our members already serve. **This discussion led to a unanimous Council decision: each of the three Sophia Christi locations (Eugene, Portland and Battle Ground) will choose a local organization or agency where one or more of our members already have a relationship as volunteers.** These organizations will be our Ministry Partners this first year. We will focus on creating relationships through our volunteers with the goal of deepening an ongoing and shared vision of service. At the end of the year, funds collected over and above our communal expenses will be divided equally between the three organizations we have chosen to support. Based on this 'experimental' project we will fashion our 'Mission' line item in the 2016 budget.

There will be further conversations at our Masses in April. As always you are invited to talk with Council members about your thoughts, interests and involvements. You can email me or talk with Mitch, Carol, Judith, Leanne, Joy L. and Jim L., Mary and Helen. There will also be further discussions at the next Council meeting on May 31st to which you are all invited (see above for details).

Member Reflection

Each month we try to feature a reflection from a member of the community. So far we have had messages from members of the Parish Council, but all are invited to write a paragraph or two about what Sophia Christi means to you or how you came to become involved in this community. Send your postings to this address for sharing in one of our upcoming newsletters. This reflection comes to us from our Council President.

I have a few months now under my belt serving on the Parish Council of Sophia Christi, and I'm having a great time working with Toni and my fellow council members on stewarding our community and helping further the mission and vision of Sophia Christi. The generosity of our membership both in time and talent has enabled us to grow our resources to better support our Pastor Toni, who is doing phenomenal work in building bridges to the wider community. It has also gotten us to a place where we can begin to seriously discern how we, as a Catholic Body, feel called to serve and give to those in need in our respective communities.

For me personally, Sophia Christi has been a place of welcome and spiritual healing and nourishment, and where the love and expansiveness of Christ is truly

palpable. I am so grateful for that. I remember something my faith formation director said during my preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation many years ago at the Newman Center in Eugene. She said that we are indelibly marked at our Baptism as a member of Christ's Body, and that really stuck as being true for me. It helps explain why I have never been able to really connect with God outside of a Catholic context. And yet the traditional Church still felt like it excluded me. I felt like an orphan in my own family, unwanted and unacceptable. Coming to Mass and celebrating with all of you has profoundly changed that and it has been a place where I am able to experience God's love for me, and where I have come to know that I am one of His own. The thing is I know I am not alone in this; there are many many others that feel something similar, that are longing to know that they too are precious beyond measure in God's eyes. So, it is truly my joy and honor to belong to a community that includes, accepts and loves all - as God does.

I encourage you all to take some time this Easter to think about what Sophia Christi means to you, and consider how you can best help realize Her vision in your community.

The Lord has Risen! Indeed, She has!

--Mitch Moore

Website

This is a reminder that the Agenda and Minutes for Council meetings are posted in the Member Portal of the website. The 'Pastor's Report' was included as an attachment to the March 22nd Minutes and these are also accessible to everyone interested in some of the ongoing work being done 'behind the scenes'. 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.

We are entering a new stage of ministry and commitment as a community and show evidence of a growing maturity. The Spirit was tangibly present at last Sunday's Council meeting, and continues to move us forward in our mission to serve those on the margins. As we mature as 'one Body in Christ' we more closely resemble the early disciples who "were of one mind and heart" in their dedication to holding resources in common and sharing whatever they had with those in need. Individual choice is the foundation of collective choice, and the choices we make as 'one Body' integrates and magnifies our personal efforts allowing us to serve in an even more powerful and sustainable way. This Holy Week, as Sophia Christi, we once again place ourselves in the hands of God at the feet of Christ. We wash one another's feet, literally (in Battle Ground) and figuratively (in Eugene and Portland). We face into the unknown and commit ourselves to the journey, trusting the Spirit to lead and inspire us along the way.

May you have a blessed Holy Week and a glorious Easter,

Toni