

October 4, 2015

Dear Friends,

A week ago, reflecting on events transpiring outside my window, I began the October newsletter to you this way:

Today is Sept. 27. I'm sitting in an apartment in the heart of Center City Philadelphia, where a helicopter hovers continuously overhead awaiting the arrival of Pope Francis. We are expecting over one million people on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, three blocks from where I'm sitting, for his outdoor Mass this afternoon. The lines of people trying to get through security in hope of seeing the pope, many with tickets to the Mass, are several blocks to a mile long. The city is shut down. Has been since Friday. Streets and bridges have been closed or closing for days. The local newspaper isn't being delivered to residents of this section of Center City because delivery trucks can't get through police and National Guard barricades. We are inside the so-called 'traffic box'—a Traffic Free zone surrounding the Parkway. Crowds of people are everywhere, often singing, chanting and cheering as they wait. There is probably no place on earth safer than this one today. I've been here many times over the past four years, though never on crutches and using a knee scooter to get around.

On Friday, with Francis still in New York, many of the streets here were already closed to traffic and the larger crowds hadn't yet arrived. I made my way through airport-style security gates to the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul down the street from where I'm staying. A Prayer Pavilion dedicated to Our Lady, Untier of Knots (to whom Francis is especially devoted) had been erected next to the Cathedral entrance. People were invited to write their prayers on a long strip of paper-like fabric and tie them to the Pavilion's frame. I wrote out my prayer and my dear friend tied it to the frame of the arched doorway where it danced in the breeze. In an impromptu stop before the Cathedral this afternoon, Francis stepped out of the pope-mobile as it ferried him toward the Main Stage set for Mass. He moved to the Prayer Pavilion and, standing before its arched entrance, he blessed the thousands of prayers rustling in the wind. It was an especially poignant moment, happening only a few hundred feet from where I was sitting, though I could only be present via Live TV broadcast. I prayed for all of you, for us, for Sophia Christi and for an untying of knots within the institutional church that has closed its eyes and heart to the full equality of women—women Spirit is calling to stand 'in persona Christi' before the broken altars of the world.

Limited as I was—broken foot preventing walking among the crowd or even waiting in multiple-hour-long lines to get through security—I 'watched' the Saturday night motorcade from a 30th floor window facing the Parkway. Through binoculars I saw the tiny figure of Francis as he waved to the crowds lining the street. The pope mobile was lit from inside so Francis could be clearly seen in the evening darkness. I heard the roar of the crowd before catching sight of the vehicle carrying him swiftly along the route. I felt a need to actually 'see' him, not on the screen but 'in person' to the degree I was able. I carried my hopes for you, my prayer for Sophia Christi, and offered them as invisible incense into the rising ethers of the night.

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**. Please bring entrees, salads, veggie dishes and desserts for the potluck meal. 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. 23rd**, at **4:00pm**. A potluck follows our celebration. Please bring entrees, salads, veggie dishes and desserts to share. 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 4 and 25**, at **10:30am**. Please bring non-perishable food items for the poor and hungry of North Clark County, as well as healthy food to share after Mass.

Upcoming Events:

A Reminder—Sophia Christi Fall Retreat Postponed until Lent

It's not too early to start thinking about Lent! The Parish Council has decided to postpone the fall retreat to sometime in Lent, which this year begins February 10th and ends March 24. A date for the retreat has not yet been set, but the goal is to shoot for mid-to-late February. We are looking for volunteers interested in helping with the planning and programming of the retreat. If you have ideas about ritual, music, discussion topics or activities, and/or if you'd like to help with logistics planning, please consider joining our planning committee. –Mitch, Council President
Contact: Mitch at naloorider@gmail.com.

Pastoral Update:

Parish Council Meeting – October 18

The next Council meeting is October 18 from 1:00 to 3:00 in Salem at the Ike Box Coffee Shop. All are warmly invited and welcome to attend the meeting. To join a carpool from Eugene and Portland please contact either Judith (Eugene) or Toni (Portland). The agenda will be posted in the member portal of the website in the week prior to the meeting. If you can't attend but have something you would like to add to the discussion, please contact one of the following Council members: Mitch, Joy L. or Jim L. (Portland); Judith or Carol (Eugene); Helen or Mary G. (Battle Ground).

Portland Ministry Partner—Rose Haven—Continuing Needs

We will continue collecting the following items for Rose Haven's women and children at Masses in Portland. Eugene members of Sophia Christi are invited to participate in this effort until a Ministry Partner in Eugene is chosen. Please note what is currently most needed, as needs change seasonally:

- Large/Plus Sized Clothing
- Warm blankets (fleece or wool preferred)

Hygiene Needs:

- Feminine hygiene – tampons & pads
- Hand sanitizer

- Shampoo & conditioner (travel size is ideal)
- Soap & body wash
- Toothbrushes & toothpaste
- Pocket Tissues
- First aid supplies
- Deodorant
- Body lotion
- Combs/brushes
- Razors
- Incontinence pads

Contemplative Prayer/Study Group—Eugene

*As the prayer minister of Sophia Christi community in Eugene, I was delighted to learn that a meditation group was forming, thanks to Dianne Turner and Anna Lankutis. Previously, I had experienced such a group for 12 years and felt sad when it ceased. We meet at Dianne's home—such a comfortable setting—and use the book, **The Naked Now**, by Richard Rohr, to expand our thoughts concerning meditation. I am renewed and my own friendship with Spirit is deepened as I sit in silence with others in the quiet room. I feel the Power of Love as each of us breathes.*

*It is a great blessing to share reflections of my spiritual life with others whom I trust completely. At our September meeting, I shared the prayer, "For Solitude," by John O'Donohue, author of **To Bless the Space Between Us**. One message within the verses called to me: I am never alone. This is significant to me, for my husband Paul died a year ago. I realize that truth so completely within the group. I "See what I see" and "Hear what I hear" when others share their perspectives. Within our group, I am encouraged as I find a sense of peace and healing. Hopefully you will join us.*

The Contemplative Prayer Group meets second and fourth Wednesdays of the month from 6:30-8 p.m., at the home of Dianne and Bruce Turner. For more information about the group, contact Dianne or Anna in Eugene. —Mary, Sophia Christi's Prayer Minister

Website

Remember that the newsletter, current homily, and Council minutes are posted on the website each month, as are all upcoming Sophia Christi events along with directions to those events. 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.

It almost seems the energies of this time in the life of the world are especially volatile. No sooner does Pope Francis leave Washington, D.C. than John Boehner resigns as Speaker of the House, opening the door for further congressional chaos. No sooner does Francis leave the country than we are hit with news of his meeting with Kim Davis in a seeming show of support for her claim of conscientious objection to issuing marriage certificates to same-sex couples. One day later, in a fascinating reversal of that news bomb, the Vatican confirms that Francis' only legitimate "private audience" with anyone before he left D.C. was the meeting he himself arranged with a former student, Grassi, and Grassi's male partner of 19 years! When events having strong emotional impact juxtapose one another in such rapid succession we often experience something akin to emotional whiplash. This has been a week of whiplash.

Being in Philadelphia throughout the Pope's visit to the U.S. was uplifting and inspiring in many ways, even as it was jarring in others. Watching bishops, cardinals, deacons and seminarians occupying all but a handful of liturgical roles during the entire tour, the only ones seated around or even near the altar, women, even nuns, absent from the elite 'forward' section of churches—this was exceptionally painful and disheartening. Yet as I watched Francis' humble, pastoral manner in Congress, in Harlem, in the Philadelphia prison, and his loving attention to a young man with cerebral palsy and his parents—I could see the figure of Jesus reaching across generations and cultures bridging Galilee and America, reaching from his 1st century expression through Francis to touch the hearts and minds of 21st century peoples. The symbolism was rich and the figure iconic, while the compassion was palpable and, for some, transformative.

Yet now, just a few days beyond Francis' visit we in Oregon, and the country as a whole, are plunged once again into the bowels of tragedy with 9 innocent people killed in a mass shooting just a few miles south of us in our own state! The welling storm of anger in the hearts of ordinary people is growing as we become increasingly revolted by these horrific acts of gun violence. More and more of us are beginning to demand that our elected officials at least experiment with some of the solutions other nations have found successful in combatting this senseless violence. As we stand with the families devastated by this most recent tragedy in our own backyard, we pray for them and for those injured and killed in this callous demonstration of hopelessness, isolation and rage. We pray for the courage and capacity to endure our pain and grief rather than go numb. And we pray that Spirit will open doors of cooperation among our legislative leaders and motivate the majority to carve a path through the dense forest of special interests to craft a solution to the daily carnage wrought by guns in America. May Holy Wisdom light our path, and may Christ's compassion so visibly displayed during Francis' visit evoke the compassion of our nation's soul and of all of us who strive to live lives grounded in love.

May recognition of God's presence in joy and in sorrow fill our hearts,
Toni