

January 3, 2016

Happy New Year everyone,

It has been an interesting and challenging year on the national and global scene, with so many issues raised and so few solutions found. I have watched, often feeling shocked and helpless, as violent actions and hateful speech continued to monopolize the media. Much of what I've seen and heard seemed intent on promoting fear, anger and a sense of hopelessness throughout the country, if not the world. In such an environment it is all-too-easy to lose faith and succumb to the perspective of fear-mongers and purveyors of doom. The voices are loud and passionate, seemingly convinced of imminent danger, and they are persuasive, weaving tiny threads of fact with thick yarns of deceptive innuendo and misinformation. We can get caught up in a culturally molded group-think operation and lose sight of the Ground of Being on which we stand and in whom we live and move and have our very existence. At stake are our own life experiences, our deeper instincts for the true and the good, our sense of the holy—of wholeness itself—and our God-given ability to think, to feel compassion, and to act in a manner suited to our common humanity.

On this Feast of the Epiphany it is appropriate to remember who we are and Who we follow—the Christ whose star led Wise Ones of another age to listen to the voice of conscience, safe-guarding an innocent baby and his family from the harmful intent of a Roman king. Extreme vulnerability lies at the heart of both the Christmas and Epiphany stories, and God is revealed through the courage and witness of strangers, astrologers, who follow the light of their own tradition to the heart of love and mystery.

The Gospel directs our vision and our actions toward an open-hearted reception of the stranger at our door. It urges us to recognize all of our sisters and brothers as part of the family of God. In the reading from Ephesians for today, the author tells the Jewish followers of Jesus that Gentiles are “coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” We continue wrestling with this basic Gospel imperative to treat everyone outside our faith, our culture, our ethnic, tribal and/or national identity, as members of our own body, as our partners in life and equal to us in every way before the one God. As people who follow the teachings and example of Jesus, we are called to be bearers of ‘Light that illuminates the darkness’ in our world, in our time. It is a tall order amid the angry rhetoric spawned by both a lust for, and a fear of losing, power. It challenges us to keep our hearts and minds firmly anchored in the one Law (love of neighbor, self and God) and our feet firmly planted in the Ground of all Being, reminding ourselves that God-in-all-of-us-and-everything is All-That-Is.

**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 9**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. Please bring entreés, 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, **January 10, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 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.

### Upcoming Events:

#### **January Parish Council Meeting cancelled**

With several people out of town and holiday activities continuing for others the Council decided to cancel its meeting set for January 2. Planning for the February retreat is ongoing, however, with members compiling information about costs. If you have questions or concerns you would like the Council to address at its next meeting, please contact Mitch at [naloorider@gmail.com](mailto:naloorider@gmail.com)

#### **Sophia Christi Lenten Retreat—Feb. 19 & 20 Mark Your Calendars**

*The Lenten Retreat is coming up soon! It will begin in the evening Friday, February 19th through Saturday February 20th at the Salem 4H Camp, located about 8 miles west of Salem. It's a beautiful camp in the forest, with cabins, a dining hall and a chapel on site. There are a number of comfortable cabins, each with four rooms with bunk beds, a common living room and a large bathroom with private showers and toilet stalls. You will need to bring your own bedding, such as a sleeping bag or sheets and blankets. The accommodations are simple, but comfortable. Cost for the overnight stay is \$18.25. Meals will be provided and the cost is \$7.25 for breakfast, \$7.50 for lunch, and \$9.00 for dinner. Vegetarian and gluten-free options will be available as well. Look for registration materials at next weekend's Masses. For more information contact Mitch Moore at [naloorider@gmail.com](mailto:naloorider@gmail.com).*

### Pastoral Update:

#### **Treasury Report**

In the November newsletter, Judith (Council Secretary) wrote that the Council had voted to donate all of Sophia Christi's post-expense income for the year to our 2015 ministry partners. Portland had chosen Rose Haven, and Battle Ground the North Clark County Food Bank. Eugene decided to support both organizations this year and continue its quest for a local partner in 2016. Members of all three Sophia Christi locations eagerly signed on to this method of outreach to the poor and marginalized of our region. We saw it as a tangible way for us, as a parish community, to pool our resources and follow the lead of Pope Francis in offering compassion and practical assistance to those most in need in our various communities.

I am thrilled to report the results of our first experiment in collective giving. Carol, (Council Treasurer) provided the numbers, Judith wrote the cover letters, and I enclosed checks with letters and mailed them on December 31. The North County Food Bank received \$852.89. Rose Haven received \$952.89 due to an anonymous gift of \$100 from a donor who earmarked the donation specifically for Rose Haven.

Thank you to every one of you who increased your giving this year so that Sophia Christi could reach individuals and families needing food, shelter, clothing and vital services to simply survive and manage their lives. In this and so many other ways you live your values of compassion and solidarity with the poor. I hope you will join me in continuing, and perhaps expanding, this important ministry in the year to come.

## 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 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:

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

## 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](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.

Richard Rohr, in his Daily Meditations New Year's Day says: *"The Christian vision is that the world is a temple. If that is true, then our enemies are sacred, too. Who else created them but God? The ability to respect the outsider is probably the litmus test of true seeing. And it doesn't stop with human beings and enemies and the least of the brothers and sisters. It moves to frogs and pansies and weeds. Everything becomes enchanting with true sight. One God, one world, one truth, one suffering, and one love. All we can do is participate. I hope you enter the New Year with this awareness and an intention to join in with all your heart, mind, and body!"*

It is snowing here in Portland as I write these words, the first snow of the season and the first of this New Year. Already over an inch on the ground, the forecast suggests these beautiful flakes may continue falling throughout the day and into late evening. I put snow high on my list of enchanting experiences. Everything changes in challenging but also magical ways when we have more than a light dusting of snow. And today I am choosing to hear Rohr's words through this serendipitous event—*"everything becomes enchanting with true sight"*, he says.

True sight is relaxed and receptive. It opens to receive and contemplate the wonder of this sanctuary we are graced to live in, to experience, to dance and play in, and to enjoy as participants. The earth is a grand all-encompassing mystery we can't fully see or understand. It is God's world given to us free of any expectation other than we love it, cherish its wonder, enjoy its beauty and treasure its bountiful gifts. Beyond

that expectation is only one other—that we bless each other with love, mercy, respect, and compassion, recognizing that we and the earth and all its creatures form one Body. We are one family. As Christians we name this truth ‘the Body of Christ’. As 21<sup>st</sup> Century progressive Christians we may name this truth ‘the Cosmic Christ’ recognizing ‘the Christ’ as the manifestation of God in the physical realm.

It is a beautiful, magical world we inhabit, full of mystery and teetering on the brink of questions unanswerable by any single nation, religion, tribe or people. It will take all of us because we are a whole system, a single body with many parts. As a global people we are beginning to recognize this truth, and many of us are starting to move in that direction; others, such as Pope Francis, are entering and then acting out of that awareness. There is solid reason for hope within the seemingly mounting darkness. Hold to the light. Move into the awareness of ‘the One’ and let your actions flow from that awareness as often as possible this year. When you lose your footing, as all of us will at times, return to that awareness. Let that be an ongoing meditative practice throughout the year. As Rohr says: “Everything *becomes enchanting with true sight. One God, one world, one truth, one suffering, and one love. All we can do is participate. I hope you enter the New Year with this awareness and an intention to join in with all your heart, mind, and body!*” I join him in that hope for all of us.

May God’s blessing be felt by all of you in a special way in the year ahead,  
Toni