

February 7, 2016

Lenten greetings,

Ash Wednesday is just three days from now, so when we gather for Mass next weekend we will be celebrating the First Sunday of Lent. In anticipation of the season I want to reflect on the words most often used now during the distribution of Ashes, “repent and believe in the Gospel.” In his daily meditation today, Richard Rohr says, “Jesus’ first recorded word in at least two Gospels is unfortunately translated with the moralistic, churchy word *repent*. The word quite literally means *change* or even more precisely ‘Change your minds!’” Another way of saying this would be: ‘change your thinking, change your attitudes’. All of us adopt attitudes and habits of thought at times that we aren’t fully aware of. Sometimes these are judgmental, critical, and negative thoughts. Sometimes they are obsessive, reactive, indifferent or greedy attitudes. If you imagine your mind as a darkened movie theater with a familiar, repetitive film projected on the screen, complete with a dynamic soundtrack of voices and evocative instrumental music, you have an idea of how these habits and attitudes operate. They seize our attention and inhibit our ability to see or hear anything other than the film or video playing incessantly on the internal screen of our mind. These emotionally-laden monologues become prime motivators of subsequent actions since we often live and move inside that theater a good portion of each day. The ‘still small voice’ of God is drowned out by the mesmerizing effect of surround sound and instant replays in Technicolor. Lent presents us with a counterpoint and challenge to these habits of mind. The season invites us to change, to grow, to become aware of these habits and attitudes and then to intervene, to make the turn so as to ‘return’ to the truth of God’s indwelling Spirit. Lent asks us to return to the ‘good news’ of God’s reign in our own heart as well as in the heart of the world. It invites us to heed God’s invitation spoken through the prophet Joel in the first reading of Ash Wednesday: “return to me with all your heart; rend your hearts not your garments and return, for I am gracious and merciful, slow to anger and rich in kindness.”

“Change your minds, your thinking, your attitudes, and believe in the Gospel, the good news,” we are told. Believing isn’t simply a matter of accepting what is said in the Scriptures to be true. Believing is an action word. Believing means we put our lives in God’s hands, as Jesus did, and walk the path of a disciple—accepting what comes, carrying our crosses with faith and courage, and doing our part in midwifing the reign of God on earth by orienting our lives toward justice, truth, holiness/wholeness and peace.

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, **February 13**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. Please bring soups, salads, and veggie dishes for the simple Lenten 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, **February 14**, at **First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd**, at **4:00pm**. A potluck follows our celebration. Please bring soups, salads

and veggie dishes to share for the simple Lenten meal. If you are interested in being part of the choir as a musician or singer, please come at 3:00 for rehearsal.

Upcoming Events:

Sophia Christi Lenten Retreat—Feb. 19 & 20

Our retreat is two weeks away! It will begin at 7:30pm Friday evening, February 19th and continue through Saturday February 20th, ending at 4:30pm. Dinner on Friday will be at 6:00pm and we encourage everyone to gather for dinner if schedules permit. The retreat takes place at the Salem 4H Camp, 5390 4-H Road NW. 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. Registration materials will again be available at Masses next weekend. For more information contact Mitch Moore at naloorider@gmail.com.

Parish Council Meeting, Feb. 19

Our February meeting will take place Friday evening at our retreat site, the 4-H camp in Salem. Since Council members were already planning to attend the retreat it became an easy decision to create space that first evening for our bi-monthly meeting. All Sophia Christi members are invited to participate in the meeting as well. If you have questions or concerns you would like the Council to address at its next meeting, please contact Mitch at naloorider@gmail.com

Pastoral Update:

Introducing our new Parish Council member—Kathy Glover

My name is Kathleen Mary Glover. I'm divorced, with four children and four grandchildren. I moved to Portland in 1999 from Kathmandu, Nepal, where I had been working. I am a retired Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. I'm enjoying retirement with more time for gardening, baking and reading among other things. I volunteer as a Court appointed advocate for foster children, at CASA, and at a Homeless site. I'm a Jesuit Volunteer Encore member. I've been a Catholic all my life. During the past 10-15 years I've become concerned about the issues of male domination and clerical child abuse within the Catholic Church along with the neglect of so many current topics that are vitally important to Catholics. I joined Call to Action a number of years ago and helped to organize a Portland branch. I am pro-life - towards all of life. I'm a pacifist, against capital punishment, strongly in favor of gun control and concerned with issues pertaining to the protection of animals and our environment. It has been a joy to support Women Priests in the Northwest and to attend the many ordinations. I have been an active member of Sophia Christi since the community began. I consider Sophia Christi my parish and Toni my pastor because her sermons are wonderful, something to take home with me. They make me think. The community is wonderful. The environment is always beautiful. Sophia Christi is a rich resource for my spiritual needs. -- Kathy

Contemplative Prayer/Study Group—Eugene

The Sophia Christi Eugene Contemplative Prayer group met on January 27th with what seems to be the core group of ten people. After our 20-minute contemplative prayer practice we read from Richard Rohr's "The Naked Now." This chapter is discussing the fact that Jesus is both fully human as well as fully divine at the same time and "... we still think of ourselves as mere humans trying desperately to become "spiritual," when the Christian revelation was precisely that you are already spiritual ("in God") and your difficult but necessary task is to learn how to become human." (p. 69) Although this practice of solitary prayer and meditation is new to me I have begun to see the evidence of God's presence everywhere all the time. And I have become a better person as a result of being around spiritual people trying to become better human beings. Though winter has its icy grip on us I am warmed knowing God is with me everywhere I go. May God bless you everyone! --Bruce Turner

Treasurer's Note

If you made a contribution to Sophia Christi in the past year you will be receiving a letter of gratitude in the next few weeks that can be used for tax purposes. If your address has changed, or if you fail to receive the letter, please let us know.

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.

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.

As I sit at the computer this sunny, spring-like day on the cusp of the penitential season of Lent, my mind straddles the bridge between a hardly-noticeable winter and the early buds of spring. It also straddles the status quo of my ordinary attention and the

invitation to see beyond the outer coating of all that is familiar into the deeper reality of God's constant, merciful presence in everyone and everything always and everywhere. We are fortunate to have a season in which to contemplate God's mercy in our own lives and in the life of the world. Mercy is a word we hadn't heard in the Church very often until Pope Francis brought it out of the shadows of 'retribution' and 'punishment' into the light of God's deep and abiding love for all of us and for all of creation. Our God knows the many temptations we face as human beings, temptations that grow from our hunger for food, for love, for recognition and status, for control of our lives and circumstances, for power, for material comfort and possessions, for the exciting experiences earthly life can provide. God, our Creator, knows us, knows how we are, how we think and why. God knows what we want and what we actually need. God is the breath and life within us, the inner reality of all that is. And God's identity, as revealed in Jesus, is Love, is Mercy, is care for the fallen sparrow and tender devotion to the weak, the ill and the poor within the world and within the heart and mind of each and every one of us. As I reflect on God's unqualified mercy this Lent I hope to begin seeing it everywhere as tiny buds sprouting in political discourse, as new growth sprouting from seemingly dead branches of social justice initiatives, and as tiny blossoms of fragrant new life emerging in stagnant and contentious human circles everywhere. In order to do that I will need to recognize the temptation toward instant judgment of those who think differently as well as cynical attitudes and old habits of mind that would dismiss that new growth out of hand. I hope all of us can learn what we need to learn and let go of what is holding us captive in the dark, isolating theaters of our minds this Lent and prepare to emerge into the light of God's holy dawn when Easter finally arrives.

May all of you have a blessed and spiritually fruitful Lent,
Toni