

April 3, 2016

Dear friends,

These last few days have been glorious—sunny, warm, the air filled with flower essences I can't clearly distinguish while tulips, daffodils and magnolias greet me as I walk around the neighborhood. People are out gardening, sprucing up their yards, and greeting me with open smiles as I pass. "Enjoying the sun?" we ask each other. A letter carrier hurries from the post office and runs past me saying "I have the rest of the day off to be in the sun!" We both laugh as he continues on his merry way. I can't help but think how perfect the timing. It's the first week of Easter and people seem joyous, as though they've finally been released from the tomb-like confinement of the rain and cold of winter. It is nearly impossible to stay indoors. The sun and warmth beckons with a magnetism too compelling to ignore. It is our springtime 'return of the sun' and it promises refreshment, a healing of spirits and renewed life for dampened hearts if we surrender to its remedial powers. Easter works in similar ways deep in our souls. We are invited to greater openness and vulnerability so Christ's Light can enter us, and through us enter the world. We are summoned out of self-protective behavioral tombs into the warmth and beauty of human connectedness, and the fresh task of building and re-building community. We hear this invitation in today's readings as Jesus appears to the disciples who are huddled behind locked doors for fear of the Jewish authorities. "Peace be with you," he says, before showing them his hands and his side to reassure them that it is, indeed, him. What he does then is give them a mission that will require them to leave that locked room, that tomb of fear, and go out among the people offering forgiveness, mercy, understanding and compassion. But Thomas is missing from the group that evening, and doesn't see Jesus. He missed that pivotal experience and doesn't believe. Jesus knows, however, that the whole family is needed for the mission of building the human community into a cohesive whole. Forgiveness and mercy are needed. Inclusivity is needed. So he returns the following week for Thomas. John tells us the disciples "were again inside." They didn't stay behind those locked doors! They received the Holy Spirit from Jesus and took themselves out into the world. In the first reading from Acts today we're told: "many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the disciples." Though their listeners were reluctant to join them for fear of persecution it didn't stop the disciples from spreading the light, joy and curative power of Easter to all they met. God's sunshine for the cold, water logged soul, was alive then and is alive now in God's people who bring the healing warmth of kindness and compassion into a waiting world.

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, **April 9**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. Please bring an entree, salad, or veggie dish for our 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, **April 10, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd, at 4:00pm.** A potluck follows our celebration. Please bring an entree, salad or veggie dish 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:

Parish Council Meeting, April 17

Our next Council meeting is scheduled for April 17 at Ike Box Coffee Shop in Salem. Carpools are available from both Eugene and Portland, and all Sophia Christi members are encouraged to come and participate. If you are unable to come, and have questions or concerns you would like the Council to address at its next meeting, please contact Mitch, our Council president, at naloorider@gmail.com

Summer Picnic—Mark your Calendar for August 7!

A date has been set for one of our most enjoyable events of the year—the summer picnic at Carol's in Stayton. Those of us who have hiked through the forest Gary planted over 40 years ago can attest to the wonder and beauty of this lovely country home. We will have more information to offer in upcoming months, but please put this date in your calendar and plan to come to this relaxing summer gathering.

Pastoral Update:

Introducing Parish Council members—Joy and Jim Learned

Joy and Jim Learned have been members of the Parish Council for more than 4 years. They found their way to Sophia Christi, their Church home, about 7 years ago when Joy's good friend Sister Virginia saw a story in the local newspaper about a woman Priest (Toni) with a church in Portland. They have been devoted members ever since. Joy and Jim play a large role in the success of Sophia Christi in so many ways, but most importantly they are in charge of the potluck dinner after Mass in Portland, as well as setting up and cleaning up dining room and kitchen. Joy and Jim live in Woodland WA on 5 acres where Joy grows a large garden, raises chickens and sells eggs. At present she is also raising four pigs. Joy is happiest when working in and around her barn.

Volunteering is an important part of Joy's life and for many years she volunteered at St. Andrews Episcopal Food Pantry. The Pantry was an important part of Sophia Christi's outreach to the poor before it closed three years ago. At present Joy spends one day a week at Rose Haven where she has also been a volunteer for many years. Rose Haven is Sophia Christi's current Ministry Partner in Portland.

The Learneds have been married for 49 years, raised 3 children, and have many grandchildren. Because of the dedication of Joy and Jim, like so many others, Sophia Christi is a vibrant and loving Catholic Community. —Carol Zolkoske, Treasurer

Portland Ministry Partner—Rose Haven—Most Needed Items Currently

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:

- Underwear (new only)
- Socks (new only)
- Practical walking shoes

- Bras
- Rain jackets
- Umbrellas

Personal Care Items: New and unopened please

- Feminine hygiene – tampons & pads
- Shampoo (travel size is ideal)
- Soap & body wash
- Hand sanitizer
- Tooth brushes
- Toothpaste

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.

Today is Divine Mercy Sunday. In his homily today, Pope Francis said: *“Not everything (by the author of John’s Gospel) was written down; the Gospel of mercy remains an open book, in which the signs of Christ’s disciples...concrete acts of love and mercy, continue to be written. We are all called to become living writers of the Gospel, heralds of the Good News to all men and women today...The Gospel of mercy, to be proclaimed and written in our daily lives, seeks people with patient and open hearts, “good Samaritans” who understand compassion and silence before the mystery of each brother and sister. The Gospel of mercy requires generous and joyful servants, people who love freely without expecting anything in return.”* What if we begin to see ourselves as “living writers of the Gospel?” If we truly embody the identity of ‘disciple’ and allow ourselves to stand in that room behind locked doors witnessing the return of Jesus, if we feel his breath as he imparts the Holy Spirit and hear his words sending us out to **forgive** people, to show them mercy, to exercise understanding and compassion—what Gospel story might each of us write? It is interesting to contemplate the Gospel as **an open book**, a collection of stories still being written today which will continue to be written as long as there are people who take up the mission Jesus has entrusted to his followers. We are among those followers. Standing in that room, seeing the wounds he shows us, feeling his breath and hearing his voice, are you prepared to be a conduit of Light and Mercy? We stand before the Mystery with open hearts to the best of our ability, growing in courage, taking one step at a time toward an increased willingness to be vulnerable. The sunshine and beauty of spring can make it easier to be hopeful and relaxed in our vulnerability. The Light of Easter can help us know that our efforts in the interest of love and mercy are never wasted, and will, in fact, produce ongoing ripples of goodness through the end of time.

Happy Easter,
Toni