

September 4, 2016

Dear friends,

I had the wonderful opportunity of spending two nights in a cabin by the river last month. It was enough time to relax a little and allow the murmurings of nature to move through me, clearing my head and nourishing my spirit. As I sat contemplating the trees and the flowing water I noticed yellow leaves dropping now and again from limbs high above the riverbank. They floated through the air until coming to rest, gently, on the surface of the river. Seemingly unperturbed by the dramatic change in their position they simply rode the current as it carried them out of sight downstream. I was struck by the calm acceptance of falling, of landing, of being carried through ripples, swirls and miniature rapids without any sign of resistance. Not that I would expect resistance from leaves, but I was open to the 'teacher' in that moment, the one I so often neglect in the bustling hustle of life in the city. Watching and allowing the 'teacher' to show her face, I simply observed the peaceful beauty of the natural world and allowed it to speak in a language it, and most likely I, know best—a language unobscured by words and concepts, a language of movement and direct experience. A single leaf lets go its perch and its life-supporting task as the season comes to an end. Then it drifts and dances on wind currents before coming to rest on the surface of swiftly moving water. There it dances and swirls to the tune of a different current as it allows itself to be carried wherever the river will take it, letting life happen, letting go, demonstrating peace and faith in the natural process. The leaves and the river remind me once again that we live in a sanctuary we call 'earth' where God's face is hidden from view only because we have lost (or never acquired) an ability to see. Our very first bible, Richard Rohr once wrote, is nature itself. We have forgotten how to read, how to hear the voice of God in the river, how to see the face of God in trees and plants, animals, humans, water, the food on our tables, even the computers and phones that consume so much of our everyday lives—all earthy elements offering themselves to us with abandon. The face and hands of God, the heart and love of God, permeates physical reality at every level, and God uses every possible means to reach us, to speak to us, to manifest God-Self saying "I'm here; I'm with you; I love you with total abandon." If we could begin to recognize, then appreciate and even revere the Earth in all her manifestations as the holy garment of God, the sacred clothing God wears to be physically present in a visible, audible and tangible way in the physical universe, we could then feel and see God everywhere. And, perhaps, as a species, we could also begin to reverence the Earth as the tabernacle it is, and the environment as more than a life-support system needed for survival. All elements of our environment could then reveal themselves as God's vestments, the clothing God chooses to don in the sacred realm of Creation.

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, **September 10**, at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2823 N. Rosa Parks Way** at **5:00pm**. Please bring an entree, salad, veggie dish or dessert 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, **September 11, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd**, at **4:00pm**. A potluck follows our celebration. Please bring an entree, salad, veggie dish or dessert 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, October 22

The next Council meeting will be at Ike Box Café in Salem from 10:00am to noon on October 22nd. All Sophia Christi members are invited to the meeting. Carpools can be arranged from both Eugene and Portland. 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

Pastoral Update:

We Enter Our Tenth Year

We celebrated our 9th Anniversary at Masses last month and launched into our 10th year of life as a community. In many ways it seems impossible that nine years have already gone by. As we gathered for our potluck meal in both Eugene and Portland we continued soliciting ideas for next year's 10th anniversary celebration, something we had begun under Judith's inspiration at our community picnic the week before. We will be collecting ideas from all of you during the months ahead, so please share your thoughts with Toni, Mitch, Judith, Carol, Kathy, Dianne, Bruce, Joy or Jim. If you prefer, simply write your idea on a slip of paper and place it in the box marked "Sophia Christi" which you will find at the back of the Church. Those slips of paper will help the Council create a joyous and meaningful anniversary celebration next summer. And if you are interested in helping to plan the celebration, please let one of the above Council members know so you can be included in the planning process as things move forward.

Pledge Drive

Our pledge drive is moving along nicely with nine households in Portland and seven in Eugene having submitted pledge cards so far. At this point \$900.00 has been pledged toward our base-line operating expenses of \$1500.00 per month. Expenses include rent on church facilities in Portland and Eugene, website fees (domain names, server, updating and maintenance), printing, pastor stipend, advertising and outreach, office and liturgical supplies, insurance and state (non-profit) fees. We have a little way to go before pledges match expenses and we are hoping to close that gap this month if possible. We would like to reach a point where we exceed those expenses so we can donate our excess to ministry partners Rose Haven in Portland and Catholic Worker House in Eugene at the end of the year. That's when the need is greatest for those on the streets. Both Rose Haven and the Catholic Worker House extend our care and service to this vulnerable population through Sophia Christi volunteers each month but money is always needed for food, resources, housing, etc. Our goal is to financially support these efforts to the degree possible once our expenses are met.

I extend a **special invitation** to those of you receiving this newsletter who are unable to participate in our monthly liturgies. If you have visited the website, believe in the mission of Sophia Christi, and/or simply want to support what we are doing, please consider making a one-time, monthly or yearly contribution. By clicking the "Donate" button on our website homepage you will find our mailing address (5658 N. Denver,

Portland, OR 97217) as well as a portal for PayPal. Thank you for being part of our extended community. We see you, appreciate you, and hold you in our prayers.

Portland Ministry Partner—Rose Haven—Update

Rose Haven is located at 627 N.W. 18th Ave. in downtown Portland. It is a day shelter for women only (and their children) and is open 5 days a week, Monday through Friday, from 8:30am to 4:30pm. It is closed for a break between noon and 1:00. Food is served from 8:30 to noon. Rose Haven volunteers are invited to offer their skills in art, writing, organizing, sorting, fundraising, computing, and medical consulting, or to help in creating a class for the new wellness and empowerment program. There are a variety of needs and many ways for both women and men to become involved as a volunteer. Please check out those many opportunities by going to

<http://rosehaven.org/helping/volunteer/>

New from Rose Haven's Website: "We are desperately in need of a new panties and socks (all sizes) as well as travel sized shampoo and conditioner! Please help us spread the word!"

"We always need backpacks for our women, so used bags will be gratefully accepted and used for women in need. Additionally, we ALWAYS need new underwear and socks, bras, blankets, sleeping bags, travel sized shampoo/conditioner/hand sanitizer and handled bags (paper sacks from the grocery store are great)."

Eugene Ministry Partner—Eugene Catholic Worker—Update

Volunteers continue to make 200-300 sandwiches two days a week to be delivered to individuals living on the streets of Eugene. Additional volunteers are needed to assist with making these sandwiches, as well as making soup for Sunday morning at the Occupy Medical site, and for serving breakfast Wednesday through Saturday at the Washington-Jefferson Park. As summer ends, and we move into the fall and winter months, the need for a large quantity of food will diminish somewhat and the sandwich making effort will likely move to one day per week in the future. Dianne, Kathy and Jessica will continue the project, however. If you are interested in helping out please contact either Dianne or Kathy. Anna will continue to coordinate all other activities related to the ministry partnership with Catholic Worker. Thanks to all who continue to donate and to be involved with this ministry partnership. The individuals we serve are most grateful! For questions, or to volunteer, you may contact Anna at 541-683-1936, or by email lankutisa@gmail.com. --Anna Lankutis

Ongoing helpful donations for the Catholic Worker Community houses:

Socks, towels, hats, jackets, sweaters, sweatshirts, gloves, men and women's personal hygiene products, bread, jelly, eggs, coffee, sugar, milk.

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.

We reach the end of summer in just a few weeks. The holiday we celebrate this weekend traditionally marks the end of one season and the beginning of another, even though fall equinox is still three weeks away. It already feels like fall here in Portland with temperatures staying in the mid to upper 60's during the day, intermittent rain showers and at least one extreme downpour on Friday. We are in the midst of a seasonal change that seems earlier this year. Given the cultural and political tensions disturbing our collective psyche, the human and natural worlds also seem to be reflecting upheavals as though they are mirror images of one another. All of this can be terribly disturbing. But it is important for us 'modern' humans to realize what native peoples have long known--that the earth and her creatures form one holistic eco-system. What we see happening in the global 'body politic' is reflected in the earth's environmental 'body' as well as in our own individual bodies. It's all of a piece, in other words. "We are one body, one body in Christ" Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians and in Romans. That this oneness extends beyond 'the Church' to the entire population of the earth is something many of us already believe and accept. The invitation now is to take that concept one step further and recognize that the earth itself and physical reality as a whole is the manifest 'body' of Christ. It is one vast, complex, holy creation—manifested from the 'void' of no-thing-ness that Genesis attempts to articulate. Seeing the world this way requires us to respect earth's resources and creatures, to contemplate their dignity and open ourselves to their teachings independent of any utilitarian designs that would violate that dignity. What does 'labor' look like when viewed from this perspective? What about extractive technologies that threaten the integrity of land, water and food sources? What is the nature of work if respect for all resources forms the bedrock of human value systems? I'm reminded here of an interview with author Marie Kondo who wrote the bestseller: "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up." She prays before beginning a task, advises us to consider the "feelings" of things, thanks objects and blesses them before letting them go. This seems radical and crazy to some, but it is a small example of the level of respect we might aspire to as we relate to the material reality we inhabit.

Happy Labor Day Weekend,
Toni