

December 4, 2016

Dear friends,

We have entered the season of Advent this year in the wake of a brutal presidential campaign that has left our national family, and even our presumed national values, in tatters. This traditional season of hope, this time of expectant waiting for new life to emerge from the hidden womb of the world, for the return of light in the darkest time of winter seems, for many of us, to be suffering within a collective sense of dread. Accessing hope, let alone joy, is perhaps a bit harder for progressive Christians this Advent than it has been in the past. And so it is necessary to remind ourselves of spiritual truths embedded in Scripture that point beyond our natural desire for comfort allowing us to see the Holy in that which is dark and frightening. Last month Jesus' words in Luke's Gospel reminded us "the day will come when not one stone will be left on another, all will be torn down." We pondered the theme of "empire against empire" against the backdrop of election results that focused attention on sharp, angry divisions—nation against nation—within our national borders. We were encouraged by the words of Clarissa Pinkola Estes—"do not lose heart; we were made for these times." And now, on this second Sunday of Advent, John the Baptist leads us further along this path announcing, "the reign of God is at hand" which many of us have tended to think means "the time of peace and harmony is at hand". However, in her Commentary on today's Gospel for Celebration magazine, Sr. Mary McGlone interprets John's words this way: "it's time for a major shake-up; go into the water, come out renewed and ready for what is to come."

In 2006 Matthew Fox wrote an article entitled "The Return of the Black Madonna: A Sign of Our Times or How the Black Madonna Is Shaking Us Up for the Twenty-First Century." He begins by making clear that she is found all over Europe as well as in Africa, Asia, India and Turkey. Our Lady of Guadalupe is another expression, sometimes called the "brown Madonna," he says, and "she comes to shake us up." "The Black Madonna is Dark and calls us to the darkness...something we need to get used to again," he says. She "invites us into the dark and therefore into our depths...this is where Divinity lies...it is where illusions are broken apart and the truth lies." "She calls us to the depths of transformation, of social, economic, gender, racial and eco justice and the struggle that must be maintained to carry on solidarity with the oppressed of any kind." [matthewfox.org]

The invitation to allow rather than resist the breaking apart of our illusions is real. The time for a major shake-up has arrived. It is time to prepare. The travails of a fiery labor are nearly upon us and we, who read the signs and hear the call, must be a channel for our Mother God who, within the darkest hours, in labor, in pain, brings forth radically new Life.

Lectors: Sunday Mass Readings: If you are interested in accessing the readings for our weekend Masses they can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/> which is the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) website. We use the Sunday readings for both Saturday and Sunday Masses. Though the Church designates the New American Bible (NAB) translation to be used at liturgies, Sophia Christi uses the translation created by Priests For Equality because of its commitment to inclusive

language. Lectors will find some differences between the two but are still encouraged to prepare using the USCCB site since variations are somewhat minimal.

Mass Schedule This Month

Mass in Portland will be Saturday, **December 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, **December 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.

Christmas Eve Mass in Eugene Saturday, **December 24 at 9:00pm**. This will be our 6th annual Christmas Eve celebration at the home of Dianne and Amanda. The address and directions are posted in the member portal of the Sophia Christi website. You may also request directions from Toni by responding to this email or by calling 503-286-3584. All are invited and welcome!

Upcoming Events:

Next Council Meeting—Our Annual Meeting—December 17

Two weeks from now on Saturday, December 17, we will hold our Annual Meeting at Ike Box Café in Salem from 11:00 to 1:00. At that time we will elect officers and adopt our budget for 2017 as well as determine whether we have the means to make a year-end monetary contribution to Ministry Partners Rose Haven in Portland and the Catholic Worker house in Eugene. If you would like to be part of this discussion, please consider coming to the meeting or give your thoughts to Council members before December 17. For carpool information contact Toni in Portland or Judith in Eugene. Portland Council members: Kathy, Joy and Jim. Eugene Council members: Judith, Carol, Bruce and Dianne.

Christmas Eve Mass--Eugene, December 24, 9:00pm

Christmas will be here in just three weeks! If possible, join your community in Eugene for its 6th Annual Christmas Eve celebration at the home of Dianne and Amanda. This has become a much-loved tradition for all who have been able to participate in years past. If you are interested in more details simply respond to this emailed newsletter and Toni will get back to you. Or you can call her at 503-286-3584. All are invited and welcome.

Spring Lenten Retreat—March 17 & 18

If you haven't already done so, please mark your calendar for next year's Lenten Retreat at the Oregon 4H Center just outside Salem. The large dining hall, more intimate 'chapel' space, and lovely walking trails met our needs so well this past spring that we voted to return again next year. More information will be provided as we get closer, but save the date now to take advantage of our annual Sophia Christi retreat.

Pastoral Update:

Nominations for the Parish Council

Attached to this newsletter you will again find a Nomination Form for representatives to the Parish Council for 2017. Please prayerfully consider whether you are being called to serve the community in this way. You may return the form via email, bring it to Mass next weekend, or send it to Sophia Christi at 5658 N. Denver, Portland 97217. The Council is eager to fill two positions for the coming year and hopes you will consider becoming more deeply involved in this rewarding service.

Ministry Partners:

Rose Haven—Update

The Rose Haven website carries an extensive list of items needed by the women and children they serve. For a complete list simply go to <http://rosehaven.org/helping/donate-items/>

Rose Haven desperately needs new panties and socks (all sizes) as well as travel sized shampoo and conditioner! They also need backpacks, and paper grocery sacks. Women and children need waterproof items and clothing that can be layered.

Eugene Catholic Worker—Update

Donations most urgently needed are: socks, hats, gloves, warm coats, toiletry supplies and underwear (men's and women's). For more information or to volunteer, contact Anna at 541-683-1936 or by email Lankutisa@gmail.com

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.

New life emerges from utter darkness. Seeds, buried in the ground, break open in the dark, moist earth—unseen. It is from that hidden womb of the Dark Mother that light, the Christ Light, enters the world in ways we would never dream for purposes only God can know. Advent is a time of inner preparation that will equip us for the unknown challenges that lie ahead. We are aware of darkness this Advent in a way we have not been for generations. Let's renew our faith in Mother God's ability to birth life out of chaos, through us, and enter the darkness fortified with sure knowledge that we are held in her loving hands.

Advent blessings,
Toni