

January 1, 2017

Happy New Year to all of you,

Falling snow appears on the phone's screen. I look outside and see bare pavement, no precipitation, not even a light drizzle. Is this wishful thinking on someone's part—whoever that someone is behind the weather app? Is it yet another example of how unreliable are our sources of information, providing reasons for distrust of institutions, even while we depend on those very sources to help us navigate an increasingly complex world? I ponder these questions this first day of a new year that I, along with many of you, perhaps, have been dreading since the disturbing results of November 8 plunged our country even deeper into a calamitous divide. We march on toward January 19 with some degree of trepidation, wondering what this year will bring while preparing ourselves for battle like peaceful warriors ready to stand against injustice, stand beside threatened sisters and brothers, stand for principles of compassion, solidarity, and unity amid threats to safety nets cradling the vulnerable. Those of us who recognize the Gospel's claim on our loyalties and actions know the road ahead will challenge us in unexpected ways, ways we have not prepared for, ways that may threaten our own sense of safety, independence and freedom. So we pray for strength, remembering who we are as followers of the Merciful Healer who ate with the poor and the rich, whose table fellowship excluded no one while raising a mirror to pride, exploitation, hypocrisy and hard-heartedness.

This first day of the New Year we celebrate Mary, a young Jewish woman who put her faith in God, trusting the plan God had in mind, and giving herself whole-heartedly to living out that plan with humility, love and acceptance. The lowly shepherds arrive as first witnesses to the birth of her beloved son, well before the wealthier astrologers from the east that we meet in next Sunday's Gospel. We are again reminded of God's persistence in giving first place to the poor, to the least-favored and marginalized members of society. Our solidarity with the 'least' among us is required on multiple levels. What is unseen, unheeded or simply ignored and dismissed in the realms of power must be recognized, appreciated and championed by followers of the Gospel. The Gospel is our 'star of Bethlehem.' It is the light we follow in the darkest night leading us always to a simple stable where the Light of the World beckons us to lay aside all arrogance, grasping and clinging—fear and its minions—so we can, finally, SEE. We are the magi, the advantaged and hopefully generous wise ones who follow this star. We carry many gifts as we make our way across the desert sands. The riches in our coffers are desperately needed in these contentious times. The Holy One is hidden from undiscerning eyes but ready to be found anywhere and everywhere by those travelers following the star. If we look for the Divine hidden in the dark corners of the year we enter today, there may be epiphanies—God appearances—that will startle us with grace and fill our yearning hearts with love-inspired resilience and hope we can share through all the months ahead.

**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 Eugene** will be Sunday, **January 8, at First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 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.

**Mass in Portland** will be Saturday, **January 14, 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.

### **Upcoming Events:**

#### **Next Council Meeting—February 18**

Our next Council meeting will be Saturday, February 18, at Ike Box Café in Salem from 11:00 to 1:00. Please consider coming to the meeting or give your thoughts to Council members before the February weekend Masses on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. For carpool information contact Toni in Portland or Judith in Eugene. Portland Council members: Kathy G., Joy and Jim L., Annie H.. Eugene Council members: Judith M., Carol Z., Bruce and Dianne T.

#### **Spring Lenten Retreat—March 17 & 18**

Our spring retreat is coming up in just two months. It will again be held at the Oregon 4H Center just outside Salem. Sign-ups will begin at Masses next month. Look for more information about costs, facilitation and carpooling in the February newsletter.

### **Pastoral Update:**

#### **December 17 Council Meeting—Summary**

*Our Annual Meeting December 17 brought two most welcome developments. First, a new member of the Portland Community, Annie H., attended and joined our Parish Council! We are thrilled to have her join us. And secondly, we have been without a President since Mitch resigned, and are relieved and gratified that Bruce T. has accepted the position. Thank you, Bruce! We also discussed tweaks to our budget in order to bring it into balance and approved the 2017 projection. Our Lenten Retreat March 17-19 still needs a facilitator, and Toni is following up on leads. A committee is forming to create Tenth Anniversary events and gatherings next summer and/or fall. Our next meeting will be Saturday, Feb. 18, 11:00-1:00 at Ike Box, Salem.*  
—Judith, Council Secretary

#### **Introducing New Council Member—Annie H., Portland**

*For the past 10 years, I have been a leader of various faith communities. From leading retreats, to facilitating small faith-sharing groups, to making in-home visits to others in their residences, and in offering spiritual direction, I have found that my soul comes alive when I live out my calling to build community through a shared faith in a welcoming, loving, and gentle Spirit. In the short time that I have been part of Sophia Christi, I have found that its welcoming and inclusive*

*energies stimulate my desire to serve. I am thrilled to be a part of this inspiring, loving community, working together to build God's Kingdom of inclusion and acceptance. --Annie*

### **Christmas Eve Mass—Follow-up**

Christmas Eve and the first day of Hanukkah fell on the very same night this year! We marked this unusual and blessed occurrence by celebrating both at our Christmas Eve Mass in Eugene. After the Gospel we paused to light the menorah. Maddie, a high school senior raised in a Catholic-Jewish household, gave each person a copy of the three prayers said the first night of Hanukkah when the first candle is lit. She led the prayers, first in Hebrew then in English, while her father lit the candles. During the dialogue homily that followed, she told us about the meaning behind this yearly celebration and we continued talking about the significance of 'the miracle of oil,' and the power of light in the midst of utter darkness. The menorah was a common fixture in Jewish homes during Jesus' time, a symbol of the great menorah that stood in the Temple courtyard. It provided light before candles were invented centuries later. Jesus would have grown up celebrating the 'Festival of Lights,' the original name of Hanukkah. He would have known about the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus IV, the recapture of Jerusalem by the Maccabees, its rededication by Judah and the miracle of the oil—enough to light the lamps of the great menorah for one day only but remained burning for eight days. God's eternal presence with God's people made manifest at Hanukkah and God's eternal presence made manifest in the birth of Jesus were linked to one another at Mass on Christmas Eve. Our roots in Judaism are deep. The Light of Divine Presence burns within and among us all making us one in the family of God.

### **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**

*The Catholic Worker Community in Eugene is managing to serve those without food or shelter during this most challenging time of the year, despite many of those living in the Community being ill with colds and flu. They have been managing to get breakfast, sandwiches and soup out to those in need daily, but they very much need volunteers to support the effort, especially until cold and flu season is over. Last week one of the house residents who is battling cancer and is ill from chemo treatments was the one preparing and delivering food. Most assistance is needed with making sandwiches one day a week and making soup for the later afternoon three days a week. Breakfast is prepared and served four days a week. With the ongoing cold weather the Egan Warming Centers are open, but there are individuals who choose to not come in and it is the Catholic Worker Community that provides the food and assistance for these individuals in addition to many others generally on the streets.*

*Good news is that the Catholic Worker House received all the sheets they needed from the Franciscans. The house continues to need donations of men and women's toiletry items; socks, hats, gloves, coats and blankets. The Catholic Worker House continues to offer daily hospitality to those on the streets. Individuals are invited in for a shower, rest and a hot meal, and are referred to social services for assistance as needed. If you are interested in volunteering*

with any of the activities at the Catholic Worker House, contact Anna L. at [lankutisa@gmail.com](mailto:lankutisa@gmail.com)  
--Anna

## 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.

In today's first reading God tells Moses to go speak to Aaron and his children and tell them to bless the people. Following these instructions, I pass this blessing on to you:

*May our God bless you and keep you!*

*May our God's face shine upon you, and be gracious to you!*

*May our God look kindly upon you and give you peace!*

In our first reading next week we have these words from Isaiah:

*Arise, shine, for your light has come, the glory of our God is rising on you,  
though night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples.*

*Above you our God now rises and God's glory now appears on you.*

Receive these words with hope. Be blessed by the God who made you, who made us all, and who hides within the folds of history. Seek that God in the dark crevices of the world with trust born of faith in Emmanuel, God-with-us, Whom we continue to celebrate this week. The last day of Christmas—the twelfth day—is Epiphany. Our invitation this year is to look for little signs of God-light in the “night that covers the earth.” It's there. It's always there.

New Year's blessings to all of you,  
Toni