

September 3, 2017

Dear Friends,

I have migrated to the front porch for nature's inspiration as I begin to write you today. It is the traditional end of summer, Labor Day weekend, and this year it comes with a 'heat advisory' and a 'severe weather alert'. Being from Kansas my mind immediately jumps to Midwestern definitions of 'severe weather'—fierce winds, heavy rains, the threat of tornadoes. Of course there is nothing remotely possible about even a small drizzle here in summer-dry Oregon this Labor Day! Temperatures in the 90's don't really qualify as 'severe' in my experience, but this word, like many others I've learned, is relative to one's own perspective and history. Here in Oregon it is a warning about poor air quality and health risks due to 900 fires burning throughout the state! But sitting outside just now an intermittent breeze rustles oak leaves shading the porch. I'm reminded of hot childhood days laying in the cool grass under an apple tree gazing skyward while light filters through branches dancing to a tune only they seem to know. Back then I was mesmerized by the quiet peace of a lazy summer day in the rural outskirts of the city. It set the foundation for a sense of oneness with creation that evoked an inner resonance with nature, inspired quiet joy and feelings of well-being. I think of that today as we begin the transition from summer to fall, and as I continue to feel the effects of the recent celestial sensation across Oregon. Just two weeks ago millions of us were enthralled by the rare occurrence of a total solar eclipse that bridged the length of our country. Within the span of just one hour our entire nation focused its attention on the sky. As a people we were given the gift of a focal point outside ourselves, outside our tribal camps, beyond our control, and were subtly invited to regain a sense of our unity at a deep and unconscious level. We were also invited to remember what it was like to experience a child's wonder at the natural world. Though we were regaled with all the science behind the marvel we would witness, and given information and warnings about traffic congestion here and in the path of totality, it was all merely 'adult stuff'. It had practical relevance for grown-up minds but our child-selves cared only about seeing and feeling the mystery of such a powerful heavenly alignment. As the disk of the moon began to swallow the sun a deepening dusk swallowed the light. The air turned cold and silence swept over the earth. A golden halo circled the moon and briefly danced its ring of fire until, in one splendid moment, a spot of radiance burst into a dazzling protrusion of brilliance from behind the moon. Daylight returned suddenly, brighter than any dawn. The three-partnered dance of sun, moon and earth had given birth, once again, to light.

**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, **September 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, **September 10**, at **First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23<sup>rd</sup>**, 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:

### Next Council Meeting—September 16—and Call for New Council Members

Our next Council meeting will be Saturday, September 16, at Ike Box Café in Salem from 11:00 to 1:00. **I invite you to pray and think about whether you are being called to serve on the Council.** Helping guide our communal journey into a new decade is an important ministry in itself and the Council needs people with vision and a variety of skills to discern Spirit's guidance and forge a path forward together. Please prayerfully consider this invitation and come to the next meeting if you can. If unable to come, please give your thoughts to Council members before the September weekend Masses on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. 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.

## Pastoral Update:

### Tenth Anniversary Celebration

*Hope, kindness and love. That's what I think of when I think of Sophia Christi. Last month we had much to celebrate on the occasion of our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. From the little church that was virtually full and was beautifully decorated with flowers, banners and decorations of every sort, to the beautiful music sung by the choir, to the wonderful homily and the Mass itself filled with meaning and pageantry. It was a day that will be long remembered by many others and me. We finished up with a lavish potluck where most everyone attended and had a wonderful time visiting with other members of the congregation. Much of the conversation included how did you find your way to this small progressive catholic community*

*One of the more poignant parts of the day was when a few members of the church stood up during Mass and told their stories of how and why they found Sophia Christi. Their testimonies were all different and profound. It pointed out yet again that we are all on different journeys and yet on the same journey. For me that journey is to truly believe that God gives us hope, God is always kind and God always loves us no matter what. Thank you members of Sophia Christi and especially Toni for being on my journey with me and congratulations on 10 wonderful years. –Carol Z., Council Treasurer*

### Contemplative Prayer Group – Eugene

*Our contemplative prayer group met at Judith's house. We were small in number, but big in spirit. We started our group with our usual quiet, twenty minute meditation. The quiet was met with a woof, and scratch at the inside door. Persistent, though polite, these sounds kept us grounded, with an occasional smile, from each of us, as we tried to maintain our spiritual*

*composure. Lesson for me, as the dogs were let out to join us, they don't need to meditate to be in the present moment. –Rhoda K.*

### Ministry Partner:

#### Rose Haven—Update

Due to limited storage capacity, Rose Haven is currently accepting new and like new summer (only) clothing. They are also very low on small sized panties, wipes, travel-sized toothpaste, deodorant, bras, shorts, and boy's clothes. Please help them spread the word! They also need general supplies such as backpacks (with and without wheels), shopping bags with handles (grocery store bags are perfect), rolling suitcases and carts, sleeping bags, reading glasses and sewing kits. For an additional list of needed items simply go to

<http://rosehaven.org/helping/donate-items/>

#### Eugene Catholic Worker--Update

Eugene volunteers will resume collection and delivery this month of items needed by guests at the Catholic Worker house. The list includes: warm clothes and socks (including mismatched socks), travel size hand sanitizer, soaps, shampoos and grooming items. Articles always welcome as well are backpacks, blankets and sheets. If you have any questions please speak with Kathy Pekarsky, Rhoda Kirwin or Dianne Turner

### 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.

As our nation came under the spell of sun and moon at play in the heavens, the solar eclipse lit a path across the continent. The multitudes were transfixed as something amazing and beautiful invited all to stand together, at the same time, and look toward the heavens. Millions did just that, across the entire length of this country. Too soon we turned our attention back to our desks, our individual ordinary lives, and the news cycle forgot about what we'd just experienced, or that we'd experienced anything together, as one people, in a nation so politically at odds. It seems timely that our readings next weekend remind us of our common bonds, both as a community that follows the teachings of Jesus and as human beings created and sustained by the one God. We are asked to recognize our responsibility to and for one another, to take seriously the command to love our neighbor and find ways of handling our differences in a spirit of openness and respect. In an individualistic culture we have great difficulty accepting those teachings that direct us to 'take responsibility.' It's hard to understand the difference between co-dependence and interdependence when living the values of an ultra-individuated society. And it's a major challenge of our time to accept, as a body politic, that we share a corporate responsibility for the vulnerable and weak in light of such an extreme emphasis on individual rights and freedoms. But the mandate to love our neighbor as ourselves, Paul reminds us next week, is still there. Standing in a field

watching the sun through dark eclipse glasses I felt connected to unknown strangers across America. I know I would strongly disagree with many of them if we were forced to have a political conversation, and I recognize how the flames are continually turned up on those hot-button topics precisely to hinder the possibility that the two of us would find common ground in our humble and vulnerable common humanity. The forces at play on the ground beneath that celestial display work overtime to stamp out awe and wonder and obscure the threads of unity. But we can tap into the reality of our oneness any time we remember we are one family. That is the Truth of our existence. And, remembering, we can follow Jesus' final words in next week's Gospel: "If two of you join in agreement to pray for anything whatever on earth, it will be granted you by my Abba God in heaven." So if you wish to join me in praying for the bright light of compassion to burst forth from the shadows of hatred and fear darkening the American soul, we can put our collective energies into that communal prayer. We can draw on the awe-inspiring image of harmony evoked by the transit of a solar eclipse across our nation. It is a unifying symbol, bridging our differences, drawing opposites together in peace. We can simply and profoundly ground ourselves in Scripture's promise that communal prayer in service of Love is always answered, whether we have eyes to see the results or not. And we can relish that harmonic symbol of light bursting from the shadows in one fell swoop across America as we stand together in prayer--trusting God is present in our midst.

Labor Day blessings to all of you,

Toni