

March 4, 2018

Dear Sophia Christi,

In his Daily Meditation last Tuesday titled 'An Unfolding Future,' Richard Rohr referred to astronomer Edwin Hubble's 1929 discovery that the universe is expanding. Rohr said: "The latest evidence shows that this expansion is even happening at an ever-increasing rate! It seems to mirror the increasing rate of change with each new technological and scientific breakthrough. This rapid change is scary and unsettling. I can see why people are panicking and trying to find some solid ground, a fixed point to the turning world," he says. (Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation, Feb. 27, 2018, "An Unfolding Future", Center for Action and Contemplation) I've been thinking about these words and about the anxiety I, myself, and so many others experience as we try to handle increasing demands on our time within a culture of ever-decreasing tolerance or sympathy for 'down-time', for time we emotionally, physically and spiritually need for our own and for society's well-being. This very human need was brought home to me again following our recent Lenten retreat as a community. Finding solid ground is especially difficult when what we have thought of as 'ground' dissolves underfoot or is excavated while we have our attention on other things. When the world is turning so fast we can't keep up but believe we should the result is often a sense of despair or shame, anger or apathy. Talking, laughing, and crying with others who share the stresses and distresses of these demanding times can be comforting, even healing. When this happens while holding onto a deeper vision, an embrace of Mystery, a faith in the non-physical realm of reality, a love for Creation and nature, and a basic openness to the Presence of the Sacred within and among those gathered, then it's possible to refocus and even find meaning in the crazy-making circumstances of an incredibly unsettling world. We need each other. We need to know we aren't alone in our dread of the next news cycle, our anger over the latest tweet from the White House, our deep frustration and rage over yet another shooting, more children murdered, more families traumatized by deportations of loved ones. One 'fixed point' in our turning world is our connection with each other, with people who share our concerns, can speak honestly about theirs and can listen to and affirm ours. When this sharing happens within a context of acceptance and respect for the unique individual journey, hope can emerge. We can find ourselves embracing a faith that transcends everyday challenges while seeing those challenges as invitations to spiritual growth and renewal. In that environment of holy acceptance we are often able to recognize our own blind spots, our pre-conceived notions, biases, and emotional reactivity. Our spiritual journey can become conscious again and we can feel both supported and empowered to 'change our hearts this time' and move to a deeper place of security within ourselves and within the Sacred Reality that we are, and that this world seen rightly—seen through the eyes of interior peace, the eyes of the Spirit Within—truly is. Whether you were able to be at the retreat or not the community of Sophia Christi embraces you. It is here for you, honoring your journey and reaching out its many hands to accompany you in this rapidly changing landscape of our world.

**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, **March 10**, 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, **March 11**, 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:

#### Easter Mass and Potluck – Eugene, April 1

In addition to our regular schedule in April, we will also celebrate Easter in Eugene at our normal time of 4:00pm.

#### Next Council Meeting – Saturday, April 21

Our next Council meeting will be Saturday, April 21, at Ike Box Café in Salem from 11:00 to 1:00. If you are unable to attend but have questions or ideas to offer, please give your thoughts to Council members at the March and April weekend Masses or email them to Toni or one of the members before the meeting. For carpool information contact Toni in Portland or Judith in Eugene. Portland Council members: Kathy, Mike, Joy and Jim. Eugene Council members: Judith, Carol, Jessica, Bruce and Dianne.

### Pastoral Update:

#### Annual Retreat 2018 – Sharing Our Experience

Twenty-seven people participated in our Lenten retreat two weeks ago at the Marian Estates in Sublimity, OR. Some of the words used to describe the event were: enriching, moving, beautiful, fun, healing, thought-provoking, contemplative, restorative, insightful, grounding, restful, soulful, and inspiring. Here are a few expanded reflections from some of the participants:

*While rain threw itself at the windows so hard even the fat ducks outside ran for shelter, we at the Sophia Christi Lenten Retreat were folded in warmth, an oasis of compassion in these strange, disorienting times. Carmel's sweet clear voice called us deeper into our understanding of ourselves and trust in one another. Toni offered each of us the priceless healing experience of reconciliation and forgiveness. Through the Eucharist we were blessed with spiritual sustenance to strengthen us going back out into the storm. –Kristina*

*This year's Lenten retreat offered me an opportunity to look inward, focus and listen to what God has to tell me about the next phase of my life and how to live it joyfully. The facilitator*

*began the retreat by inviting each person to draw a card with a question on it. We went around the circle, introduced ourselves and spoke about how the question resonated with us. My question was, "What am I expecting?" This is the perfect question for me at this time in my life. The question remained a focus throughout the retreat. We were also introduced to the concept of Kairos time, an ancient Greek word that means the right, critical, or opportune moment. We had quiet time to reflect on what Kairos time meant to us and explored being open and receptive to Kairos time at a soul level. We also focused on the muddiness of our wounds and how they keep us from being present and open to God's presence in our lives. Thank you to those who organized such a wonderful experience.- Dawn*

*The retreat was a very good Lenten experience. Good sharing, quiet time and liturgy. –Kathleen*

*We found people's stories deeply moving and also sources of encouragement, since many of the participants seemed to be sharing the same sort of middle-aged malaise that we are feeling--not discouragement, but just an awkwardness, a wondering "What am I supposed to be doing with myself now? Is it time for a change?" The inquiry questions were a brilliant way for us to focus on these premonitions that maybe hadn't yet come into full consciousness for us -- until we saw them written out, staring us in the face. It was no coincidence that each person seemed to get precisely the question they needed. (Coincidence is just God's own cause and effect, after all!) --Lise*

*I enjoyed getting better acquainted with members from the Eugene congregation. I personally found the faith sharing the best of any retreat I have been on. I credit Carmel with that along with the sincerity of the people involved. And I liked the food --Mike*

*Lent is a richer experience for me, thanks to the Sophia Christi Retreat. Carmel's and Toni's thoughtful, caring ministrations were like warm water flowing over me, melting me into awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence. I especially loved choosing the rock, then muddying it, contemplating that, and coming to reconciliation by washing it clean. --Judith*

*I loved the relaxed and informal tone and the "random" challenging questions. The entire experience was wonderful and prompted some important changes of direction for me. --Mary Lyn*

*Blustery and rainy outside, warm and loving inside. It was a communal occasion, where we learned so much about each other through the introductions and individual sharing; and it was a personal journey, with time set aside to contemplate our deepest thoughts and feelings. I entered into the day with disturbing feelings of doubt and left feeling renewed and hopeful. Thank you Carmel and Pastor Toni for this lovely spiritual retreat! --Dianne T.*

*I am so glad I attended the retreat this year. It was wonderful to spend the day surrounded by loving, compassionate people who share a deep desire to grow closer to God. I'm looking forward to next year! --Josie*

### **Contemplative Prayer Group – Eugene**

*The Contemplative Prayer Group meets every second and fourth Wednesday of the month. We are continuing to read and discuss 'The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation', by Richard Rohr. The subject matter in the book seems to draw us into deeper examination of some of our traditional beliefs as Catholics, and illustrates ways in which we might embrace a deeper and more contemplative life within the flow of the Trinity. Our time together is rich and challenging, but ever fruitful! For more information about the group, see one of the members after Mass: Amanda, Dianne D., Dianne T., Bruce, Judith, Kathy P., Rhoda, Anna. --Anna*

### Seeking new Ministry Partners in 2018

If you are currently volunteering with a non-profit organization serving the poor, homeless, marginalized or immigrant populations in Portland or Eugene, and you would like the organization to be considered as a potential Sophia Christi ministry partner, please let Toni or one of the Council members know your interest. We hope to begin new partnerships this year in both of our locations and continue addressing the needs of our underserved neighbors. In the meantime, **PLEASE NOTICE: we are no longer collecting items for either Rose Haven in Portland or the Catholic Worker in Eugene.** Due to a variety of changes within these organizations we no longer have volunteers at either location.

### 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.

We are at the mid-point of Lent as we gather in community next weekend. We will hear the story of the man born blind and witness his ability to stand up to the religious and political authorities of his day as they ridicule him and mock his experience. It is a story we see playing out in today's news media as people come forward to share their experiences of trauma, oppression, and systemically-contrived blindness only to be shouted down and berated by dominant groups and authority figures who are unwittingly unable to 'see.' Structural blindness can be the easier choice, of course, because real 'seeing' changes our perspective on things and that leads to an internal, uncomfortable, pressure to shift gears and make some often-radical changes. It also makes clear those obvious cracks in the structures we've created socially, cracks that glare at us, become increasingly obvious and refuse to be hidden any longer. These are cracks that trouble our social conscience and force us to change the systems governing how we treat one another. Each Lent many progressive churches attempt to remove our structural blinders by locating present-day 'stations of the cross' in challenged neighborhoods, processing through the streets, stopping and praying at each station, drawing attention to injustice. Lent is about taking off our blinders, both on the personal and the social level. We enter Holy Week just three weeks from now. In the busyness of our fast-paced lives, let's make these next days count. Attend to the blinders. Ask Spirit to help you see.

Lenten blessings,

Toni