

May 6, 2018

Dear Friends,

As I gaze out my window this morning the rich red and soft pink rhododendron blossoms have their sweet faces open to the sun. One small blossom in a newly opening pink cluster gazes back at me. She seems to be the first in her cluster to unfold and I sense delight in the simplicity of just 'being'. She is pure grace and beauty, dancing in the light breeze, transforming sunshine into radiantly selfless joy. The only thing required of her is simply 'to be.' A friend of mine recently shared a phrase with me that had come to her during meditation: 'the privilege of being.' This is what I see in that single blossom. I see it as well as in the entire bush, in the trees that form a canopy over me as I write, in the petunias, pansies and geraniums sitting happily in pots on my front porch, and in the tomato sprouts reaching for sun at the end of the deck. It reminds me of a song by Colleen Fulmer that begins: "Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy. Just to be, just to live, is a blessing, is holy." As we grow into the realities of this world most of us manage to inherit two conflicting messages. One is "you are precious, with intrinsic value, just as you are." This message comes through various channels: mothers and fathers hopefully; church, sometimes; extended family, chosen family, close friends. Sadly, not all of us receive this message, but few of us escape the other which is loud and insistent, the one that says: "you have no value in and of yourself; your only value is in what you can produce and how you can be used." It, too, comes through some of these same channels, as well as from society-at-large and the motivations of 'dark power' to crush and exploit human energy, needs, ingenuity, talent, and passion for economic and political ends. It takes a great deal of strength to combat that second message and real courage to face the internalized belief structure arising from its soul-crushing force. But our inherent value cries out from the prisons in which that negating voice confines us. Each of us is an expression of the Divine. We each have inherent value and dignity and, like the single blossom in the rhododendron cluster, we need simply 'to be' who we are so the entire bush can erupt into vibrant, radiant bloom. The 'privilege of being' is instilled in all of us and in all created things, animate and inanimate. Gazing at a blossom, watching leaves dancing in the wind or squirrels racing up a tree, observing the stillness of stone or the movements of our brothers and sisters as they occupy communal space—all of these and more have the power to connect us with the sheer 'privilege of being.' To participate in the mystery of an uncharted universe, unique in our experiences, each of us a story in the memory bank of God, a thread in the tapestry of Earth's own enduring story—this is holy. It is a blessing to simply 'be'.

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, **May 12**, 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 Mother's Day, Sunday, **May 13**, at **First Congregational Church, UCC, 1050 E. 23rd**, 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:

Summer Picnic – Sunday, August 19, 1:00 to 4:00pm

Save the date for our annual summer picnic. You will be hearing more about this in next month's newsletter.

Next Council Meeting – Saturday, June 30

Our next Council meeting will be Saturday, April 21, from 10:00 to 12:00 via Conference Call. If you have questions or ideas to offer, please give your thoughts to Council members at the May or June 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:

Summary of April 21 Council Meeting

We reviewed the Pastor's Report (Toni's accounting of her prodigious work on behalf of Sophia Christi) and the Treasurer's Report (Carol's record-keeping of our actual income/expenditures as compared with the projected amounts). Then we reviewed the evaluation forms people filled out after our retreat in February. The comments, opinions, ideas, etc., will help us in planning a retreat (or retreats!) for next year. Mike Newton, Parish Council member from Portland, is preparing a questionnaire that will be emailed to all of us, so we can get your feelings about what would be best for us. We will eagerly await your responses! The date is set for our Summer Picnic at Carol's beautiful property near Stayton. Mark your calendars: AUGUST 19, 1-4:00. Oh boy! Some of you in Eugene may remember Michelle, who came to Mass a few times with her son Newton. They've been living in their car, and both First Congregational and Sophia Christi have been able to offer them care and support. We think the ordeal is almost over-- Michelle may have a job. And the Council has an important task coming up: future visioning. We need to begin thinking long-term about Sophia Christi. –Judith Manning

Contemplative Prayer Group -- Eugene

We have nearly completed the book: The Divine Dance; The Trinity and Your Transformation, by Richard Rohr. We will soon be choosing another book for study, our third. We tend to spend a good amount of time with a book, about a year, because we read and discuss the subject quite thoroughly. We are a lively group, so most gatherings are quite enriching with much discussion, as we explore the never ending mysteries of our faith. If you would like to join the group for our next session, and/or have a book you would like to suggest for study, please contact one of the group members after Mass. The members are: Dianne Turner, Bruce Turner, Dianne Dugaw, Amanda Powell, Anna Lankutis, Mary Michaud, or Judith Manning.

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.

This coming weekend we celebrate the feast of the Ascension as well as Mother's Day. There is a natural connection between these two celebrations in my view. Jesus prepares the disciples for his departure as a mother prepares her children for short-term or long-term absences. Some time back Jesus told them he would not leave them orphans. Whatever the age of the children, mothers usually try to protect their kids from experiencing abandonment. Often, especially with young children, they reassure—"I will be home before bedtime," or "I will always be with you". Sometimes it helps to leave them a task, give them a reason to continue or invite them to fulfill a personal, familial or spiritual legacy. Jesus follows this mothering instinct in preparing the disciples for his departure. He tells them again that his mission is now their mission. The work of spreading the 'good news' to the ends of the earth and throughout all of creation is now in their hands. He entrusts them with fulfilling the task he was given to do. How they do it will be directed by the indwelling Spirit that will be activated within them following his departure. They have been relying on him to lead the way. They have been followers, watching but not understanding, hearing but not grasping or integrating what he has been saying, teaching and showing them through the years. They have acted as if he would always be around leading the way, so they didn't try to think for themselves, change their attitudes or open their own hearts since his was always open. But now—now he was leaving and his work would be their work. Whatever happened from here on out would be up to them. He knows they are ready for the transformation Spirit will bring. They are as well prepared as any group of disciples could be. They are able to be on their own, able to listen to their own hearts and the hearts of one another in discerning the way forward and in making new decisions as circumstances arise. They are ready to leave the nest and won't do so unless he himself goes away. It is the day of his Ascension. And it is the heart of the mother's task to teach her children to draw on the Spirit within them as they learn to shoulder the world on their own. Like the disciples in Jesus' time, we have been nurtured into our mission of spreading the gospel of God's ongoing loving presence in this world. We are challenged to grow into who we are and who we are becoming. We, too, draw on the Spirit within to lead the way.

May the blessings of Mother's Day foster the nurturing instincts within us all,

Toni