

July 1, 2018

Dear Friends,

Summer has arrived. Several large still-green tomatoes continue growing toward perfection on the deck outside my window. Hydrangeas are in full bloom, a lush mix of pinks, lavenders and blues in glorious display. Raspberries are ripening faster than I can harvest them and summer fruit fills produce shelves at the market. This morning, at the stroke of midnight, we crossed the threshold into July. It's hard to believe half the year is over but I am choosing, in this moment, to focus on bounty and allow my heart to rest in gratitude. I need a return to hope and a recognition of all that is good in the world. I need balance within myself. The forces of disruption, emotional turmoil and chaos unleashed heartlessly on society needs the counterweight of a deep-seated faith in the triumph of good over evil. Like so many others I have been heartsick these last weeks as news of children snatched from their mother's arms, children and families traumatized, frantic, separated and placed in prisons called "detention centers" has swept the country. I am angry. I am writing and doing what little I can to support, financially and otherwise, those who are standing on the front lines shining a light, offering a hand, protesting the atrocity being perpetrated by ICE and the present U.S. administration. What has happened to our country and our values? Recently I revisited Emma Lazarus' poem, "The New Colossus" whose words are emblazoned on the bronze plaque at the base of the Statue of Liberty. In her poem Emma called this statue "A mighty woman with a torch...her name Mother of Exiles." These powerful words bring tears to my eyes as I read and savor them once again. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" These are sacred words and a sacred trust. Law has teeth, and can fortify or dismantle structural injustice, but it is poetry and story that moves hearts, inspires courage and calls us to put forward the very best we have to offer. And there is, in us, so much good to offer. Fear, cynicism, and resentment can cause us to lose our balance and send us over the cliff. We need faith more than ever to stabilize our weary souls. That faith is grounded in the stories passed down through our ancestors, stories of redemption, of dramatic changes no one could foresee like the election of John XXIII, the recall of once-banished theologians who laid the groundwork for the Second Vatican Council. We need to remember Paul's words to the Romans: "All things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose" (Rm 8:28) Reminding ourselves of these words while standing in the mystery of heartbreaking times such as these can help maintain our balance. Knowing when and how to move requires that we stay connected with that light of God's presence within us. Disconnected from that Source we tend to be simply reactive rather than truly in-tune and responsive to the present moment. Whatever returns you to that balance point, whether harvesting berries, tending tomatoes, watching hydrangeas dance in the breeze, playing soccer, walking the neighborhood, visiting with friends, drawing, painting or immersing yourself in a hobby—whatever returns you to that calm center where God lives within you—go there. Be there. Take advantage of the holiday time this week to re-establish balance. Allow your heart to come home.

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, **July 8, 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.

Mass in Portland will be Saturday, **July 14, 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 Battle Ground will be Saturday, **July 15, at the home of Mary Goody (Helen's former residence) at 10:30am.** All are welcome. If you need the address please contact Toni by replying to this email.

Upcoming Events:

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

Our Sophia Christi picnic is just around the corner. I hope you are all making plans to attend. As in years past everyone is invited. This includes friends and family who would like to spend a day in the country. Not only is this a good time to connect with members of Sophia Christi, it is also an opportunity to invite someone who would enjoy a quiet peaceful day completely removed from our hectic everyday life. Pets are also welcome. All you need to supply is a potluck dish and, if you have one, a portable chair. Everything else is provided. –Carol Zolkoske, Treasurer

Pastoral Update:

Summary of June 30 Council Meeting

The Parish Council and Toni met via teleconference June 30. In preparation for our annual retreat, Mike Newton has created a questionnaire soliciting your input about the kind of retreat you would like. Look for it in your email, or pick up a paper copy at Mass. We need your thoughts and preferences and look forward to hearing from you! We also began talking about the long-term future of Sophia Christi. We addressed the need to be supportive to Toni in different ways – by giving her a long overdue raise, and taking on some of the administrative duties that she has been carrying since we started 11 years ago! She'll give us a list of those tasks and we will be asking you to help us carry them out. We also talked about what Sophia Christi might become if/when she retires. She doesn't have a plan to retire, and if we lighten her load a bit she will have more time and energy to handle the pastoral needs of the community. If you have questions or comments please talk to one of us! Portland Council members: Kathy, Mike, Joy and Jim. Eugene Council members: Judith, Carol, Jessica, Bruce and Dianne. –Judith Manning, Council Secretary

Upcoming Retreat Survey

I am overwhelmed by the dedication of our small but determined parish council. All the members are aware of how special and unique Sophia Christi is. We are in two locations but we work with Toni to help provide a meaningful spirit-filled church community for everyone. Our main topic of conversation this month was a survey Mike has been working on about our annual retreat. We would like to make these retreats even more significant. Mike has worked hard on this and so when you get the survey please take time to fill it out. It will provide vital information we need in planning next year's retreat. We are looking into options about where to hold it, and whether to make it a one-day or an overnight two-day experience. —Carol Zolkoske, Treasurer

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.

I just returned from a visit with my brother in Kansas City Monday where humidity and temperatures reminded me how grateful I am to be an Oregonian. He and I grew up maybe 20 miles from where he now lives. Unlike him I no longer feel 'at home' there though I recognize the many ways midwestern attitudes and values continue to ground and influence the way I see the world. I am equally aware of views I've acquired since leaving, and life choices I've made, that are not understood or embraced by the culture of my hometown. I think of this as I look at next Sunday's Gospel. Jesus is back in his hometown teaching in the synagogue. He finds he is unable to be all of who he is with his family and former neighbors. Their lack of faith and lack of openness astounds him. Those of you have left the region of your birth then ventured back for a visit may recognize yourselves in this Gospel. It is a common enough experience that we have a cliché telling us "you can't go home again." That doesn't stop God from sending prophets back to their home territory in an attempt to wake people up, change hearts and minds. We have plenty of prophets among us today—environmental prophets, civil rights prophets, economic prophets—the list could go on. "I am sending you to a stubborn and obstinate people," God tells Ezekiel. "Whether they listen or not they will know a prophet has been among them." Times are different but people continue to be stubborn and obstinate, especially when they are afraid of change. But prophets, the instigators of transformation, keep coming. "Go prophesy to my people Israel," God tells Amos when we gather for Mass in Portland the following Sunday, then Jesus sends the disciples out two-by-two to spread the word and continue his work. That work is now ours to do. The torch is handed to us. It is a fitting symbol for this 4th of July. How do we receive the words engraved beneath the Torch of welcome and freedom? The "Mother of Exiles" echoes the Gospel. She calls us home to our higher selves.

Peace and blessings to all of you,

Toni