

August 5, 2018

Dear Friends,

Before we even begin to know ourselves as individuals, with hopes and dreams of our own and choices of our own making we are an amalgam of influences, a community of ancestral lineages, that link us imperceptibly to the deeper, wider life stream of human existence. The limitations imposed by our biological and cultural inheritance can sometimes seem like a prison, especially when we chafe against oppressive conditions beyond our control. These seeming “accidents” of location, circumstance and history create the smooth or rocky, deep or shallow course we must navigate as the river of life flows onward toward the mysterious unknown. As we navigate these waters, deal with challenging situations, difficult people and the structural injustice underpinning our society it is natural to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, angry and sometimes even bitter. This is where we find Elijah when we meet up with him next weekend. He is running from Jezebel who has threatened his life yet, paradoxically, he prays for death. He is ready to give up, to call it quits on his people and the job he’s been handed by God. Nothing seems to be working and he tells God he’s had enough. “Take my life,” he says, “for I am no better than my ancestors.” Apparently he had expected to be—better, that is. The sheer frustration of not being able to get his message through to his people, to convince the king, or to succeed at turning things around making the world a better place has gotten to him. He lies down under the broom tree and, it seems, waits to die. God, however, has other plans, plans that require a 40-day and 40-night journey through the desert to Mt. Horeb/Sinai. Many of us know that feeling of frustration and defeat we see mirrored in Elijah. We, too, have a very human expectation that if we put our best efforts into creating a better home, a better family, a better neighborhood, town or nation than our parents, our elders or our ancestors did, then we will all experience better children, better neighbors and a better world in our lifetime. When those efforts result in either no change at all or a seemingly worse outcome it is doubly hard to continue on. It requires faith, and faith is fed by little things like food and water and internal nudges that take us further along our path. The angel, the hearth cake and jug of water appearing for Elijah out there in the desert are metaphors of encouragement and nourishment for the tired soul. When we are wrung out, exhausted and discouraged, when the road ahead seems bleak but we know it is OUR road, watch for that water and those cakes. They will be there, often tiny and nearly imperceptible. So we need to remain open and be aware. God comes to us in so many disguises, while also dwelling within us guiding our steps.

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, **August 11**, 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, **August 12**, 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

The Sophia Christi picnic is just 2 weeks away on August 19. This is always a wonderful time to spend a quiet day in the country completely away from our busy hectic lives. Family members, friends, children and pets are all welcome. Just bring a potluck dish and if possible a folding chair. Everything else will be provided. If you need directions just contact Toni or myself at 503 769 5299. Looking forward to seeing everyone. Carol Zolkoske, Treasurer.

Pastoral Update:

Retreat Survey

The retreat survey was given to everyone at Masses in July and was also sent to all those on our mailing list last month. To date approximately 30 have been returned. They will also be available at Masses next weekend. Mike has taken on the task of tallying responses and plans to have results available by early September. We would appreciate hearing your thoughts and desires regarding Sophia Christi's annual retreat. If you have questions or difficulty filling out the form please let us know. Thank you to all who have taken time to provide such valuable feedback.

Marking our Eleventh Anniversary

This month Sophia Christi celebrates the completion of eleven years as an inclusive, welcoming and progressive movement within the Catholic tradition as we joyfully enter our twelfth year as a community. We are delighted to mark this milestone on our journey and continue to serve those seeking an all-embracing theology and an alternative expression of faith and practice. Our communion table is always open to all.

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.

It is easy to forget (if we even know) how necessary we are in God's plan. God depends on us to be the hands and feet and the hearts and minds that care for each other and for the earth. Yet we are so fragile in our psychology and emotions as humans, struggling to catch up to the increasingly complex demands of an extraordinarily complicated world. We are bombarded daily with new information we must not only process but somehow understand well enough to function responsibly. Some of what we see and hear crushes our hearts. We are conditioned to see each other through the lens of "us" and "them," encouraged to make judgments, feed our grievances, and strike out at others through words and actions that undermine relationships and, inevitably, our own well being. Into this morass of social distress the words of Paul to the Ephesians descend as a healing balm. "Get rid of all harsh words, slander, and malice of every kind. In place of these, be kind to one another, compassionate, and mutually forgiving. Try to imitate God as beloved children. Walk in love." The British author and philosopher Alain de Botton has said that one of the kindest things we can do with others is to see them as children, not as immature individuals but as sensitive beings who deserve the most benevolent interpretation of those behaviors we may find difficult. We do this naturally with children, he says, but rarely with adults. Yet if we were to try to understand what is going on behind the words or actions that annoy us we might see the tiredness, disappointment, sadness or pain the other is carrying rather than react as though we are being attacked, dismissed or ignored. Paul's words to the Ephesians seem more and more timely today as slander and hatred spews through cyberspace. "Be kind to one another," he says. It is not easy, this learning to love. It is a work in progress. We are all children, trying to understand ourselves and the world—doing our best. What happens if we pave the way with kindness?

Peace and blessings to all of you,

Toni