

December 2, 2018

Advent Greetings to all of you,

There is a song we sometimes sing during Advent that begins: "Waiting in silence, waiting in hope, we are your people, we long for you God..." These words have been repeating themselves in true earworm fashion for several days now. It seems my unconscious mind has been preparing to enter this season of waiting, dragging me along on a journey that, until now, has been largely beneath my awareness. The earworm is working its magic. It rouses me from the crazed marketing blitz that drowns the fall/winter holidays. Silence has not settled in; that will require intention and some amount of discipline to achieve for minutes rather than hours each day. But hope is there and alive. It often surfaces on the wings of music, those melodies and lyrics fashioned for this time of year to lift spirits and remind us of our deep, often unconscious, longing for God. They remind me that light arises from darkness, that birth is immanent, that God is near and chooses all of us to be bearers of new life for the sake of the world. It is as though we are in our ninth month of pregnancy...waiting. With a measure of trepidation and excitement we prepare our homes, prepare our hearts, ready ourselves to receive the blessings and challenges that lie ahead. But it is the waiting that gives rise to prayers without words, prayers that enter and merge with the silence—open, listening. These are the prayers we pray during Advent, the rich, deep prayers our souls alone know how to pray. Silence brings them forth and seeds this pregnant month with strength and peace, with visions and dreams for the mothering tasks that lie ahead. But silence needs time, and it can be so hard to wait. We often look for and gravitate toward distractions. Keeping busy is not only culturally rewarded, it is our default when circumstances require waiting. The human mind is always active and drawn to problems it believes need solving. Resting in the moment, just observing what is there, seems unproductive at best and even dangerous to a mind trained to stay busy and alert and engaged with the world at all times. Waiting in silence can feel almost irritatingly uncomfortable and meaningless. But as the darkness deepens and we enter Advent those dropping temperatures draw us inside—into the warmth, into the inner world where silence has its true home. God lives in those deep places and there are many ways to get there—inspirational reading, meditating, music, contemplating a verse or story in Scripture, using imagination to enter the story, devotional prayer, art—anything that helps focus attention on our longing for and relationship with the Divine Life growing within us. Let's enter the silence together, learn to wait, and let Advent call us 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 Portland will be Saturday, **December 8**, 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, **December 9**, 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.

Christmas Eve Mass in Eugene Monday, **December 24 at 9:00pm**. This will be our 8th annual Christmas Eve celebration at the home of Dianne and Amanda. The address and directions are posted in the member portal of the Sophia Christi website. You may also request directions from Toni by responding to this email or by calling 503-286-3584. All are invited and welcome!

Upcoming Events:

Annual Retreat 2019 – Save the Date of March 16

Mark your calendar now and plan to participate in the annual Lenten retreat Saturday, March 16. Sr. Carmel will be our facilitator once again! If you are interested in helping to plan the retreat please let Toni or one of the Council members know so your name can be added to the planning team list. More details about location and costs will be provided as they are finalized, but please save the date now so you are free to participate in March.

Pastoral Update:

Summary of November 17 Annual Meeting

After an opening prayer asking for Sophia's guidance the council set to work resolving the many items on our agenda for the day. Up for discussion was the March 16 retreat planning, a committee was formed to pick a topic for the facilitator plus finalizing location and catering. We then amended the council by-laws pertaining to terms of office for members. After that we accepted Carol's resignation as council treasurer, with many thanks for her years of service to the community. Jessica Katon was voted in as our new treasurer and will confer with Carol and Toni to assure a smooth transition. Other business included setting dates for future meetings, and planning ahead for a possible summer picnic. Toni ended a successful meeting with a prayer of thanks. –Bruce Turner, Council President

Contemplative Prayer Group—Eugene

Our Contemplative Prayer Group has had an interesting month. This week, we welcomed back Dianne and Amanda from their European trip. After our meditation and readings from "The Meaning of Mary Magdeline" by Cynthia Bourgeault, Dianne D. suggested that we consider reading a different author, while still focusing on Mary Magdeline. Dianne D. read the entire book while away and found it to be unsatisfying. Subjects that the author would bring up and say that would be addressed more thoroughly later in the book are not mentioned again. We decided to read "The Gospel of Mary Magdeline" itself. We all are looking forward to beginning this approach and to the discussions that will follow. --Kathy P.

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.

We celebrate Mary next weekend, December 8th, which is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. In and of itself this has little to do with the season we are in except to set the stage for Mary's primordial sinlessness as Jesus' mother. I sometimes wonder whether the placement of this Feast during Advent, and its proximity to Christmas, has helped create confusion about whose conception it refers to—Mary's conception of Jesus or Anne's conception of Mary. I imagine most of you know the answer. According to Church doctrine Mary herself was conceived without sin and therefore we remember this teaching with one of the few Marian feasts in our calendar. I'm not sure what this doctrine means to most Catholics these days. Many of our beliefs are undergoing dramatic changes as our awareness of the cosmos, the history of the universe and our understanding of human psychology advances beyond anything imaginable in 1854 when Pius IX defined this dogma. But having a day devoted to Mary near the outset of Advent provides an opportunity to honor her—to honor her 'yes' to the Divine invitation and to ponder her pregnancy, and her expectant waiting, for the birth of her first-born child. It invites us to remember Mary, the refugee mother, giving birth amid the stresses and uncertainties of her own time. It begs us to see her in the poor and vulnerable faces of young women today, women with babies in arms at our borders, women with their children living in cars, on our streets, attempting to feed and protect their young under regressive social policies. We can carry these realities into prayer as we ponder Mary's 'yes' to an angel's ridiculous invitation. We can pray for the courage to say 'yes' to the angel who appears at our door with an insight, a question, an inspiration, a message from out of nowhere that compels our heart to jump and spin. Mary is a 'yes' person in the face of Mystery. She carries the Divine visibly for all to see. She brings forth life from the depths of the unknown. She is the icon of humanity's noble purpose—to give birth to the Divine and nurture that Divine spark in our own lives as we, too, are called to be mothers of the world.

May this season be filled with hope,

Toni