

February 3, 2019

Dear Sophia Christi,

My eyes come to rest on the emerging buds of the Daphne plant outside my living room window. Those nearly-opening buds are the early harbingers of spring at a time when winter is only half over. Even the rosebush is sending out new shoots and the geraniums have held their own through this unusually mild season. I'm sure many of my Midwestern cousins and east coast relatives would be aghast at these next words: I feel a little cheated out of winter! My internal clock depends on the seasonal cycles, one of which encourages reflection, rest from extroverted activity and expectations, time for simply being present to the internal realities and interior spaces of ordinary life. Rain helps, but rain in Oregon is a feature of spring and fall as well. Snow, on the other hand, speaks "winter" in clear, undeniable terms. It is a reminder that there is value in simply 'being', that 'productivity' is not the be-all and end-all of life. Spring, summer and fall get us out into the community, out into our yards and fields of activity 'doing' things and 'producing.' Winter is something like a seasonal 'sabbath', telling us to stop, to nurture our internal and immediate connections to family, to the God within us, to our own heart and soul. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you," God says to Jeremiah in today's first reading. These are words to contemplate. This period God refers to is a time before action, before independent activity on our part is even possible. It is necessary, invaluable time. We are to remember that God's work in us began before we became aware of our own existence, even before the seed of being-ness sprouted within us. We might call it the winter of our personal reality. The season of winter can take us back there to the pre-dawn of our lives where God's dream of us was born, nurtured, fleshed out, when God's own desire and purpose were woven into our being. It happened back there in our very personal winter. We are invited to return to that place of peace, of stillness, to imbibe the Spirit anew so that we are ready for those next words addressed to Jeremiah, "I have appointed you as a prophet...so now brace yourself for action." Spring is coming, the Daphne announces. Go inside these last few weeks of winter. Make good use of these remaining days. Lent will begin before spring arrives and will encourage the necessary introspection, the receptivity to God's voice inviting us deeper into the holy well of our own precious life. So we can be ready "to stand up" and "not be unnerved" as God leads us forward on our well-designed prophetic path. Set your heart on love, as Paul advises, and rest in the truth that it never fails.

### Mass Schedule This Month

**Mass in Portland** will be Saturday, **February 9**, 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, **February 10**, 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:

### Come to the Retreat! – Registration Forms Available

Registration forms for the Lenten retreat Saturday, March 16, will be available at Masses next weekend. The retreat will be held at the United Methodist Church in Stayton, 1450 Fern Ridge Rd SE. We will begin at 10:00am and will end with Mass from 3:00 to 4:00pm. Our facilitator will be Sr. Carmel and our theme this year is 'Boundless Compassion'. Cost is the same as last year--\$50.00--which includes lunch provided by Trexler Farms, with vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free options. Scholarships are available if needed. No one will be turned away.

## Pastoral Update:

### January 19 Council Meeting Summary

*The Parish Council met January 19 in Salem. Jessica Katon, our new Treasurer, has reviewed our finances, which are in good shape. Expected donation pledges from parishioners are coming in slowly so far. We are unable to budget for 2019 without these.*

*Jessica is upgrading our system of record-keeping so that financial reports, as well as the annual budget, can be generated more efficiently. She fixed issues we've had with PayPal. Diligent effort was required from both Toni and Jessica in dealing with the bank's new rules that created obstacles to adding a new treasurer to our account. That end was finally accomplished following this meeting.*

*Plans for our March 16 retreat are coming along well. Kathleen and Mike will take responsibility for set-up and clean-up. Carol is coordinating with caterers at Trexler Farms. Location is Stayton United Methodist Church. Cost is \$50, which includes a delicious lunch. No one will be turned away for lack of funds. Scholarships are available by emailing or talking with Toni or one of the Council members.*

*We are discussing the pastoral needs of the community as requests for pastoral care seem to be increasing in Eugene. We are considering the possibility of Toni spending an extra day there each month. This will require finding a place to meet with parishioners since First Congregational is at capacity and likely not an option.*

*Since Carol and her family are no longer able to host the summer picnic Mike and Kathleen are researching parks and churches near Salem for a new venue. Our deep gratitude goes out to Carol and her family for their many years of barbeque, country respite, relaxation and hikes in Gary's incredible forest. Their home and hospitality have been high points of our summer; they started a tradition and have inspired us to carry it forward! --Judith Manning, Council Secretary*

### A Message From Our New Council Treasurer

*Hello Sophia Christi Family - Though I introduced myself previously, when I joined the council, I am doing so again. As of November 2018, I was elected as Treasurer for the council and look forward to serving our community in this capacity. I am following in Carol's footsteps and I appreciate the many, many years she served our council. In my past, I was treasurer for two other volunteer non-profit organizations so this position is not new to me. In my every day life, I work in finance and administration for a Eugene non-profit that works in rural communities in Oregon and Washington. I feel blessed to have found this spiritual community and am happy to answer any questions you have. --Sincerely, Jessica Katon 541-521-1136*

### Contemplative Prayer Group – Eugene

*Our small group meets every 2nd and 4th Wednesday evening, and currently has space for one or two people to join. We meditate for 20 minutes; then together we read aloud and discuss a contemplative reading that supports and deepens our shared spirituality — inclusive, dynamic, and wisdom- and incarnation-focused. We have recently been looking at Karen King's introduction and translation of The Gospel of Mary of Magdala. Among other features, we have been fascinated by this Gospel's statement that, beyond the principles that Jesus directly said to live by, it is better not to "promulgate law like the lawgivers, or else you might be dominated by it." Hmm, no wonder the Church suppressed this one! --Amanda*

## 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.

As we entered 'ordinary time' we began hearing from the prophets: Isaiah, Nehemiah, Jeremiah. This fourth Sunday God's words to Jeremiah summon him to "stand up and speak" despite opposition he faces from "the royalty of Judah, its priests and its people". That call echoes through time so that now, in our own day, we still struggle with its mandate in the circumstances of our world both as individuals and as a people, a nation. God's words to Jeremiah help us hear the call of Isaiah next week: "Who will go for us? Whom shall I send?" Earlier in the reading Isaiah says, "I am a person of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips! Yet my eyes have seen God!...Woe is me, I am doomed!" He is ashamed—terrified—standing there before God knowing what he knows about his own and his people's arrogance, avarice, self-centered ways. So God sends an angel who enacts a powerful ritual in order to help Isaiah experience a cleansing of heart, mind and spirit. This purging of shame/pride brings him to a place of humility, of groundedness and balance, which enables him to hear God's urgent question, God's heart-rending invitation: "Who will go for us in this time of crisis? Who can I send?" Shame, guilt and self-protective pride now burned away, Isaiah hears God's summons, feels God's faith in him, senses the urgency and, without thought or deliberation of any kind, immediately responds, "Here I am! Send me!" These Scriptures invite us to open ourselves to the healing power of God that can cleanse the detritus of our own human failings and the resulting shame we try to hide but still carry, the debris of mind and heart that creates a barrier in our ability to hear God calling, God trusting, having faith in us to do the work so needing to be done? Can we allow the prophet within us to hear that call in the depths of our souls and respond? We do not need to know anything about the path ahead. Prophets don't know the outcome of the journey; they follow what is given them to say, to do, with the humility that comes from knowing their own flaws of discernment and character. If we can allow the remaining weeks of winter to assist us in going deeper into the corridors of our own hearts, we may be ready to respond in kind with Isaiah when God calls us to "stand up and speak" in the face of meanness, unfairness and bigotry. When we feel that nudge from within—God's call to our own inner prophet—may we then be able to raise a hand and, without question or qualification, simply and clearly say "here I am! Send me!"

May God's peace be with all of you,

Toni