

May 5, 2019

Happy Easter season everyone,

With temperatures expected to soar into the high 80's next week spring may feel like summer though there are nearly six weeks left to go before the season turns. Unusual weather patterns and the unpredictability of our social, political and religious climate puts many people on edge. In her book *Daring Greatly*, Dr. Brené Brown talks about our personal and collective vulnerability. Writing in 2012 she says: "Over the past decade, I've witnessed major shifts in the zeitgeist of our country. I've seen it in the data, and honestly, I've seen it in the faces of the people I meet, interview, and talk to. The world has never been an easy place, but the past decade has been traumatic for so many people that it's made changes in our culture....we've survived and are surviving events that have torn at our sense of safety with such force that we've experienced them as trauma even if we weren't directly involved....post-traumatic stress...happens when we've been through too much, and rather than coming together to heal (which requires vulnerability) we're angry and scared and at each other's throats." (p.27) As I consider Brown's words and think about our world-wide experience of trauma this century I imagine our traumatized ancestors who witnessed the grotesque public spectacle of Jesus' crucifixion and death. Where we are turning against each other out of fear and anguish, the disciples came together in search of healing. In all the post-Resurrection stories we see Jesus meeting with his disciples after their sense of safety has been shattered. He is present to their suffering on the road to Emmaus. He appears to them as they hide in the locked upper room, brings them peace, returns to show his love and care for Thomas who hadn't been there when he first appeared. He meets them at the water's edge, prepares breakfast for them and gracefully rectifies Peter's flagrant betrayal by asking three times for a heartfelt statement of love. Not only has he forgiven Peter, he now entrusts him with the mission he himself has begun—to feed the hungry, to tend the lost and vulnerable, to heal the broken and, finally, to "follow" him by willingly giving up pretenses and becoming open, vulnerable, so his heart, mind and life can be utterly transformed. Jesus' level of vulnerability must have been terrifying to those early disciples, especially when they began to realize this is what "following" him required. I think this may be why Christians throughout history, including today, tend to read the Gospels superficially, avoiding its radical call to open-hearted engagement with the poor, the dispossessed and suffering people of the world. Being that open to our own and other's pain demands courage, but it also requires faith—faith in light emerging from darkness, in life stronger than death, in a Love that holds all people and all things tenderly while nurturing the heart of creation and the spirit residing in each and all. "Following" requires openness and openness requires a willingness to be vulnerable, as vulnerable as Jesus before Pilate, as vulnerable as Jesus facing the cross. Can we imagine cultivating that kind of strength?

Mass Schedule This Month

Mass in Portland will be Saturday, **May 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, **May 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:

Next Council Meeting – Saturday, June 22

Our next Council meeting will take place via teleconference from 11am to 1pm on June 22. Last summer the Council decided to hold its third quarterly meeting remotely and evaluate the results. It worked so well that the experiment was not only extended to this year, but a decision was made at the April 27 meeting to use teleconferencing for all but the fourth quarter Annual Meeting. The Council voted to set up a Zoom teleconferencing account and use this for the upcoming June meeting. If successful as a meeting environment it will relieve the need to drive to and from Salem, address the uncertainty surrounding meeting space options and allow more community participation as time goes on. Watch for more details in the June newsletter. And, as always, if you have questions or ideas to offer, please give your thoughts to one of the Council members at Masses next weekend or email them to Toni or one of the members prior to June 22nd. Portland Council members: Kathy, Mike, Joy and Jim. Eugene Council members: Judith, Carol, Jessica, Bruce and Dianne.

Pastoral Update:

April 27 Council Meeting Summary

The Parish Council met April 27 in Salem. Members reported hearing very positive feedback about the March 16 retreat. A decision was made to increase retreat time by one hour next year, ending at 5:00 rather than 4:00, to make the day a little less rushed. Twenty-two people participated, including the pastor of Stayton's Methodist church who stayed the entire day.

We discussed the continuing uncertainty about whether/when Ike Box (our Salem meeting space) might close, and discussed other options. Having had success using conference calls, in the past, we looked at the possibility of using the teleconference option provided by Zoom. We unanimously decided to purchase a Zoom account and use this meeting venue for all but our fourth quarter Annual Meeting.

Mike is continuing to research possible sites for the summer picnic. It was decided that Council members will talk with people over dinner after Masses in May and June to determine community interest. The Council will then decide whether to move forward with the picnic at its June 22nd meeting. We are looking at looking at August 3 or 17 if there is enough interest.

The Easter ad in the Eugene Register-Guard succeeded in bringing four new people to our community. Three signed up to receive the newsletter and assured us they will be back.

Thoughts From Council Member Kathleen, Portland

There are many ways to break up a community. In a display of clericalism the archbishop of Portland has used several to break apart the church and community of St. Francis Church. Last summer he appointed, as pastor of this very liberal community, a very conservative priest. As changes to the liturgy and music were implemented, without input from the congregation, and despite their protests, people began leaving. The St. Francis community has a group email that serves to keep people in touch despite not seeing each other in church regularly. A number of St. Francis parishioners are also members of Sophia Christi. Recently the pastor, Fr. George, wrote an article for the bulletin explaining why women could never be priests in the Catholic Church. As more people left in response to this, there has been discussion in emails about Sophia Christi, women priests, Toni's wonderful sermons and encouragement to come to Mass.

Probably almost everyone in the Sophia Christi Community has concerns about the Catholic church. We are very fortunate to have an alternative worship community and to be able to offer this to the people of St. Francis. *--Kathleen Glover, Parish Council Member*

Contemplative Prayer Group – Eugene

The contemplative prayer group meets every 2nd and 4th Wednesday evening, and currently has space for one or two people to join. The group meditates for 20 minutes; then together read aloud and discuss a contemplative reading that supports and deepens the shared spirituality of the group — inclusive, dynamic, wisdom and incarnation focused. If you are interested in joining please speak to Judith or 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

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.

Throughout the Easter season we are reassured of God's tender care. We hear it in all the post-Resurrection stories: Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene; his appearance to the disciples in the upper room, then coming back for Thomas; his appearance to the disciples walking toward Emmaus; and his presence at the Sea of Tiberias where he fed them one last time. For the next several weeks Jesus will assure US of his ongoing presence through the medium of John's Gospel. We enter our own time by hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd who calls our name and bids us follow. The first century Resurrection stories help open our ears so his voice can resonate deep within and move us to approach. We KNOW that voice. We trust it. And when we listen closely what we hear is genuine respect for who we are, what we are, how we are. We are called 'friend.' We are named 'partners' in the great work he was given to do. He asks us to follow his way of being by embodying mercy and forgiveness, vulnerability and compassion, willingness to stay the course despite hardships and courage to face humiliation, defeat and even intense suffering without rancor. Over and over in the coming weeks he will tell us he is with us, he will tell us to love each other as he loves us, he will tell us we are all one in him, one in God. We could intellectualize these words rather than challenge ourselves to really believe them and make the effort every day to live them in our neighborhood, at work, in the grocery store, on the roads we travel through the city. It isn't easy to stay open and vulnerable while reaching across the divide of fear, disappointment and trauma. But we are given weeks and weeks of encouragement this season to do just that. Watch for signs all around of God's ongoing presence in the world and in your life.

Early Mother's Day blessings to all,

Toni