

August 4, 2019

Summer greetings,

A friend recently sold her house and announced her intention to volunteer at the U.S./Mexico border come fall. She grew up in Columbia, is a native Spanish speaker, and has been teaching English and life skills to undocumented residents of her county for years. Increasing immigration atrocities haunt her social conscience and she feels compelled to reach a hand of welcome and assistance to women and children forced to deal with a brutal system they can't possibly understand. The same day I heard of her decision I sat in my office with a spiritual directee who is equally devastated by what is happening at the border but instead of feeling empowered feels guilt because life circumstances prohibit any possibility of going there to help. The question he raised floated in the space between us: "what is Spirit asking of me as a citizen of this country, knowing what I know and bearing the burden of privilege?" As I reflected on these two conversations later I recalled snippets of the readings for next week. 1) Sarah and Abraham obeyed when they were called and went out into the desert not knowing where they were going. 2) Our ancestors made a covenant with God, "that the holy people would share all things—blessings and dangers alike." And 3) in the midst of all uncertainties, Jesus tells us not to live in fear, to stay awake. He says "much will be required of you who have been given much. More will be asked of you to whom more has been entrusted." I have tremendous respect for my friend who is taking a risk in following that call to the border. She has the heart of an activist as well as a bi-cultural understanding, language skills and a depth of experience that will allow her to be an effective advocate for the frightened and exhausted travelers huddling at our door. And I also have tremendous compassion for those of us asking for guidance in this overwhelming political catastrophe we are struggling to navigate. Like Sarah and Abraham we don't know where we are, let alone where we are going. We are trying to stay awake while knowing that fear is being used by powerful forces to manipulate us and to hide the truth. And many of us know that we, and those at the border—all of us—are a holy people, doing the best we can under exhausting and tragic circumstances, using our extremely limited personal experiences and influenced by our upbringing and culture to do what we need to do and what is asked of us. And, in this, we share the blessings and the dangers alike, even when we are not aware. There are so many fires, both active and smoldering, that it's difficult to know where to put our energy. The issues themselves are larger than life and require collective action. Even my friend who is going to the border will be working with others to tackle the extensive needs of those they are there to serve. As we pray for all who are there, everyone included, let's also pray to know what Spirit is asking of us in these challenging times, and for the courage to act on whatever inspiration and wisdom we are given.

Mass Schedule This Month

Mass in Portland will be Saturday, **August 10**, 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 11, 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, September 21

Our next Council meeting will take place via teleconference from 11am to 1pm on September 21. At the April 27th meeting the Council voted to use teleconferencing for all but the fourth quarter Annual Meeting to save on travel time for everyone. Because of a limited agenda and challenging summer schedules we decided to take a vote via email on the June business items (below) and forego the actual June meeting. If you have questions or ideas to offer the Council, or would like to be part of the process as a Council participant, please speak to one of the Council members at Masses next weekend or email them to Toni or one of the following: Portland Council members: Kathy, Mike, Joy and Jim. Eugene Council members: Judith, Carol, Jessica, Bruce and Dianne.

Pastoral Update:

Sophia Christi 'Children's Missal' Coming Soon

The new Children's missal is nearly at the printers. We hope this small booklet will help parents answer their children's questions about the various elements of the Mass, and also help children understand what happens during the liturgy. Once the missals are in your hands, we would love to hear your feedback.

Website

Remember that the newsletter and current homily are posted on the website each month, as are all upcoming Sophia Christi events along with directions to those events. If anyone has skills to offer in maintaining the site, please contact Toni. 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 our twelfth anniversary this month and launch into our thirteenth year as a progressive faith community within the archdiocese of Portland, Oregon. Many people have passed through our doors and there are 400 people who receive the newsletter each month. Working behind the scenes, Spirit uses what She will to touch those we never see. It is my hope that the words in these monthly pages bring hope where hope

is needed, comfort where there is pain, inspiration when a nudge toward creative engagement is called for, and faith in God's presence in each life and in the life of the world, especially when sadness overcomes and despair threatens. As the letter to the Hebrews reminds us, "Faith is the confident assurance of what we hope for, the conviction about things we do not see." When feeling overwhelmed by the darkened political landscape and the many problems we face worldwide it can be difficult to take that statement to heart. "Confident assurance of what we hope for" can seem like a Pollyannaish stretch! But for those of you who might want to put some flesh on that statement and deepen your foundation of hope let me recommend Richard Rohr's new book, *"The Universal Christ: How a forgotten reality can change everything we see, hope for and believe"*. You may have noticed in last month's newsletter that the Eugene Contemplative Prayer group has chosen this book as their next topic of reflection and discussion. When so many are searching for a perspective that grounds and develops a basis for hope, this offering from Rohr gently upends negative theological concepts and provides a lovingly inclusive anchor for that "confident assurance" Hebrews encourages. It is an inspiring summertime read.

Anniversary blessings to all of you,

Toni