

October 6, 2019

Dear community,

Maybe you've heard of the prophet Habakkuk whose words are proclaimed in today's first reading. If you know nothing about him don't worry. It might be because his book is one of the shortest in the Hebrew Scriptures—only three chapters and 56 verses long—so not a prominent prophet. His words, though, echo through the centuries and sit comfortably in our minds today as though screaming our own exasperation into God's ear: *"How long do we have to cry out for help before you listen? How many times do we have to yell 'Help!' before you come to the rescue? Why do you force us to look at evil, stare trouble in the face day after day? Anarchy and violence break out, quarrels and fights all over the place. Law and order fall to pieces. Justice is a joke. The wicked have the righteous hamstrung and stand justice on its head."* These words from the seventh century B.C.E. reflect the lament of our own time and place in history. Eugene Peterson, author of *The Message*, says this in his introduction to Habakkuk: *"Habakkuk gives voice to our bewilderment, articulates our puzzled attempts to make sense of things, faces God with our disappointment with God."* Even though many of us have moved, theologically speaking, from a place of blaming God for the circumstances we find ourselves in, the mainstream mindset vacillates between seeing God as 'Rescuer' and firmly believing there is no God and no possibility of saving ourselves. Yet the vulnerability we feel in the midst of a chaotic and fragmented world society is growing more and more intolerable causing an uptick in anxiety and depression across cultures. Feeling fearful and powerless human beings tend to pray, numb out, become cynical or enraged, or drop headlong into despair. Of those choices prayer is certainly the healthiest! If we can somehow access the tiniest amount of faith, that of Jesus' mustard seed analogy in today's Gospel, we are given a window that opens our minds and hearts to a wider historical perspective. Prayer invites and allows us to anchor ourselves in God's over-arching, evolutionary plan for the growth and development of human and planetary consciousness. We rightly focus on the issues and challenges of our time and our lives, of course. We are here for a purpose. Each of us has something to contribute to the building of God's reign on earth, to put our reason-for-existence in Gospel terms. But in the living out of our purpose most of us tend to forget we have one, or that our purpose is part of a larger project of which we are mostly, or entirely, unaware. Prayer takes us back there. It helps us know how dependent we are on God-forces beyond our control and understanding. And it also helps us know that as long as we have life on this planet we are important nodules on the web of God's intricately patterned weaving. Our work, in part, is to remain present, to grieve and to laugh, to experience the winds of change Spirit brings and cooperate as much as possible, to stand with and for each other courageously in the face of injustice and to recognize the Divine at play in every unseemly heart. Only faith allows for this, and prayer fuels that faith. Habakkuk, in a prayerful attitude as he begins his second chapter, says: "What's God going to say to my question? I'm braced for the worst. I'll climb to the lookout tower and scan the horizon. I'll wait to see what God says, how God will answer my complaint." And he ends the chapter with this: "God is in God's Temple! Quiet everyone—a holy silence. Listen!"

**Readings for Liturgies** can be found on the USCCB website at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/>.

### **Mass Schedule This Month**

**Mass in Portland** will be Saturday, **October 12**, 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, **October 13**, 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:**

#### **Annual Meeting – November 16 – and Call for New Council Members**

**Once again I invite you to consider whether you are being called to serve on the Council.** Helping to guide our communal journey is an important ministry in itself and the Council needs people with vision and a variety of skills to discern Spirit's guidance and forge a path forward together. Please prayerfully consider this invitation and come to the next meeting if you can. If unable to come, please give your thoughts to Council members before the November weekend Masses. Portland Council members: Kathy, Mike, Joy and Jim. Eugene Council members: Judith, Carol, Bruce, Dianne and Jessica.

#### **Annual Retreat 2020 – Save the Date**

Ash Wednesday is February 26 next year and our annual Lenten Retreat will be Saturday, March 21. We are excited to announce that Bill Zuelke and Val Hornburg, a husband and wife team, have accepted our invitation to co-facilitate the retreat. Bill directed our retreat four years ago, is a former Jesuit, a life coach and spiritual director. Val brings her skills as a Soul Collage facilitator, spiritual director and workshop leader. More details about location and costs will be provided as they are finalized, but please mark your calendar now so you are free to participate in March.

### **Pastoral Update:**

#### **Summary of September 21 Council Meeting**

*We met by conference call, the 12 of us (including Carol Z., hallelujah!). We were joined by Josie Miranda and Kathy Pekarsky from the Eugene community. They are considering our call for new Council Members for 2020. We hope a couple of people in Portland will also be interested. We discussed how to get more participation on our Fall Pledge Drive, as we need more funds to have some financial safety net. Remember, everyone already pledging needs to fill out a NEW card every year. Thank you, thank you! We're planning the Lenten Retreat day, but haven't settled yet on a location. We'll get there! Here's a big thing: we voted for a paid vacation for Toni! She'll pick the month, giving us three months notice. She's never had a month off, and we are thrilled to be able to provide this benefit for her. We are proud to announce we have a Children's Missal! Now any children attending Mass can follow along and learn about Mass in a format that they'll understand and enjoy. Looking forward to our November 16 Annual Meeting, where we vote in members and officers as well as our budget for 2020. —Judith Manning, Secretary*

## Members Corner

*I sit in my chair as I have done for months and look out the window and watch life go by. In my world it is deer, turkeys and birds. That is the ebb and flow of my life these days. When I was diagnosed with colon cancer last October I had no idea what the future would hold. I had no idea what it meant. I now know what it means. As far as the cancer was concerned it meant radiation, chemo and surgery. I now wear a colostomy bag and I want my old life back. But things are different for me now. I have come to understand that is how life works--what we want is not always what we get. Praying to God and being grateful for what I do have, which is still being alive, and hoping that the cancer does not return is my hope for the future. When I found Sophia Christi 11 years ago I was looking for a church that is based on kindness and understanding and would impress upon people that the most important part of a life well lived is caring for and loving one another. I believe with all my heart in Sophia Christi and our priest Toni. I want to thank Sophia Christi parishioners for the cards, letters, visits and little gifts. It means the world to me to belong to such a wonderful caring church. In the case of Sophia Christi I found what I was looking for and I could not be more grateful. I am looking forward to returning and sharing hugs with all. Blessings and love, Carol*

## Contemplative Prayer -- Eugene

*Our Contemplative Prayer Group has begun a new book this month, "The Universal Christ", by Richard Rohr. We've only just started the first chapter ("Christ Is Not Jesus's Last Name"), and we have already found that just about every paragraph inspires great discussions. If anyone wishes to join our group, please talk to me, or Diane & Bruce Turner. We meet every 2nd and 4th Wed. of the month, from 6:30 - 8:00 at their house. --Kathy P.*

## Financial Health and Pledges

Each fall we ask you to begin, upgrade or renew your monthly pledge to Sophia Christi. Our base-line operating expenses of \$1500.00 per month include rent on church facilities in Portland and Eugene, website fees (domain names, server, updating and maintenance), printing, pastor stipend, advertising and outreach, office and liturgical supplies, insurance and state (non-profit) fees. I would like to quote the words of Carol, our former Treasurer, regarding Sophia Christi finances: *"Perhaps some would say that talking about money is a turn off but for myself I feel so strongly about how important it is to spread the message that Sophia Christi brings to people who are in need of compassion and understanding, as well as spiritual support and encouragement, that I'm happy to talk about the financial commitment needed to make this happen. If we want to make a difference it will take not only love but also money. Please give serious thought and prayer to making Sophia Christi a priority in your giving plan in 2020."*

I extend a **special invitation** to those of you receiving this newsletter who are unable to participate in our monthly liturgies, annual retreat and social events. If you have visited the website, believe in the mission of Sophia Christi, and/or simply want to support what we are doing, please consider making a one-time, monthly or yearly contribution. By clicking the "Donate" button on our website homepage you will find our mailing address (5658 N. Denver, Portland, OR 97217) as well as a portal for PayPal. Thank you for being part of our extended community. We see you, appreciate you, and hold you in our prayers.

## 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](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 move toward the end of this liturgical year we encounter the ten lepers Jesus meets as he travels through Samaria and Galilee on his way to Jerusalem. You may remember only one of them, a Samaritan, returns to thank Jesus after discovering he had been healed. Jesus says, "Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" That word, "foreigner," carries a lot of baggage right now as global migration increases due to war, violence, famine, pollution, exploitation of lands and resources, climate catastrophes, joblessness, homelessness—and the list of atrocities giving rise to the movement of peoples could go on. As always, Jesus models what the 'Christian' approach to those-who-are-not-like-us should be if we are truly his followers, his disciples. This isn't news, of course, but it is a challenge that confronts us repeatedly in the Scriptures we read each week, and it is a central challenge of our time. One of our Portland members, Kathleen, will be going to the migrant camps at our southern border next month to be with the children. Watch for a report from her about her experience in next month's newsletter. In the meantime, holding on to our own mustard seed of faith, let's continue to pray for all who are suffering during these days of uprooting. Even plants go into shock when being repotted, having to adjust to new and unfamiliar soil. Human beings experience trauma on a visceral level. It is nearly invisible on the surface, not easily recognized and difficult to address. Like water, that trauma flows downhill through the generations, wounding children and often creating havoc for families and societies as these children grow into adulthood. And so we pray. We pray for the parents. We pray for the children. We pray for all who bring their compassion and skill to those who suffer. May they be instruments of Divine, healing love, planting seeds of hope, faith and resilience. We pray for those representing and fulfilling policies of detainment that their hearts and minds may be healed as they encounter the suffering and vulnerability of their sisters and brothers. We pray for ourselves, for our communities and our nation. May we reject the forces set on dividing us from one another, recognize difference as an invitation rather than a threat, and find our way back to respecting each other as children of this one, fragile, planet, and faithful stewards of the lands we call 'home.'

Fall blessings,

Toni