

November 3, 2019

Dear community,

The sun is creating a most spectacular orange glow through the leaves of my neighbor's oak and maple trees. The light breeze creates a shimmering effect as leaves swirl and dance to the ground like colorful 'snow' flakes, eager to fly and soar in their descent to the earthen floor beneath. I am transfixed by the beauty of autumn as I prepare for winter, relishing the sunlight and atypical warm, dry air this early November day. I think about the fires my distant neighbors in California are facing as I pray before the fire in my own hearth. We are so connected, all of us, that suffering in others creates a resonance in our own bodies whether we notice it or not. Closed hearts and closed minds are ways of defending against this resonance. Many of us do our best to avoid, numb out, shut down so as not to feel what our bodies naturally experience in the presence of another's pain. Our nerves connect us to each other, to the earth and the world. Sensation connects us to the reality of our planetary life, feeds our bodies and souls with inner knowing, connects us to ourselves. The ancients knew this truth deep in their bones, and earth-based peoples across the globe know this truth to this day. The Amazon Synod is bringing this reality into the consciousness of our Church and, by extension, the industrial mentality of the West which favors "modern development" over respect for the land and the people who tend it and call it 'home.' The focus of Amazon's inhabitants as they prepared for the synod was to engage the Church's help in saving the rainforest, their people and their traditions from being obliterated. José Gregorio Mirabal, president of the Congress of Indigenous Amazon Organizations told reporters, "This synod for us is about the planet. Either we go through a ravine and destroy everything, or we stop violence against nature and people and continue as human civilization." Most of what has been written about the synod in the U.S. has focused on the topic of married priests and women deacons. But for Mirabal and Leah Casimero, Academic Coordinator of the Quality Bilingual Education Programme for Wapichan children, that ecclesial focus distracts from what is most important. "When I think of the Amazon," said Casimero, "I think of respect for land and people, human rights, protection of the environment." Those are the priorities of Amazonia. This is about the forest, the earth, survival for all of us. "If the Amazon rainforest is destroyed we disappear," says Mirabal, "and we do not want to disappear in the name of a [western] development model. That model is at the cost of the planet." The voice of the Amazon is the voice of peoples whose nerve endings connect with the trees being cut down, animals running to escape the fires ravaging an entire ecosystem after being set by developers to "clear the land" for economic development. All live within the womb of the forest, the intricate connections of its living systems an extension of their own bodies and the communal body they form. "The church came to us," says Casimero, "we didn't go to them. In times of need and distress when our lands or rights are not respected, we turn to the church for help. It is our biggest support system next to our community support." As members of the Church we are part of this global support system. Let's remember the priorities of our indigenous sisters and brothers. We need their reminder about priorities.

**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, **November 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, **October 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:**

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

**This is a reminder of our Annual Meeting scheduled for the weekend after next.**

The meeting will be held at Ike Box Café in Salem from 11:00am to 1:00pm. We will adopt a budget for next year, elect new officers and receive new members as well as make preliminary plans for the Lenten Retreat. The Council meets four times a year, roughly once a quarter. All meetings except the Annual Meeting, will be held via conference call next year in order to ease the burden of travel for all members. If you have thought about getting involved in the Council, please prayerfully consider this invitation and come to the annual meeting if you can. If unable to come, please give your thoughts to Council members before Masses next weekend. Portland Council members: Kathy, Mike, Joy and Jim. Eugene Council members: Judith, Carol, Bruce, Dianne and Jessica.

#### **Annual Retreat 2020 – Mark Your Calendars**

Our annual Lenten Retreat will be Saturday, March 21. Bill Zuelke and Val Hornburg, a husband and wife team, will co-facilitate the retreat. Bill 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 to follow!

### **Pastoral Update:**

#### **Members Corner**

*Several weeks ago I was in front of my house when my neighbor walked by and we started talking. My neighbor's granddaughter, Emma, has been in private Christian schools since she was in kindergarten. Emma is not happy in the Christian school and next year will attend public school. When Emma questions some of the things she is being taught, she is told she needs to "pray about it." As someone who once considered myself evangelical, I can relate to that. That is one of the things I really like about Sophia Christi. It is a parish where a wide variety of beliefs are accommodated. I have personally grown greatly in my own faith journey since I began attending Sophia Christi. I have come to see a whole other side of God, a more loving side of God. I could not have done that in an evangelical church. –Mike, Council member*

#### **Financial Health and Pledges**

A big 'thank you' to everyone who responded to this year's pledge request. You have made it possible for Jessica to create the 2020 budget based on figures you've provided rather than relying on guesses based on last year's contributions. If you haven't yet filled out a card they will again be available on the back table before and after Masses

next weekend. We deeply appreciate whatever you are able to give in order to sustain Sophia Christi's ministry. Statements needed for tax purposes will be sent in January to everyone who made contributions in 2019.

### **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.

We've turned back the clock for yet another season. Sometimes this feels like an abrupt free-fall into pre-mature darkness. Though I love winter with its invitation to calm the hurried busy-ness of the three previous seasons, I do feel the jolt these twice-yearly time changes artificially force on my body and the community's system. So many practices that govern our day-to-day lives, like these time changes, are unnatural. People of the rainforest, like indigenous people in other parts of the world, allow nature's own patterns to instruct their view of reality and invite them deeper into a relationship with themselves, each other and the multi-leveled sacred environment in which they live, move and have their being. There is much to be said for all we have learned as a species by exploring the physical world with our minds, developing instruments for researching and understanding the many dimensions of life experiences on planet earth. But there are other ways of knowing, other ways of exploring and other dimensions of exploration that have been judged useless since the onset of the industrial age which are now coming forward into renewed awareness. We are on the cusp of a major shift in human consciousness, and our awareness of and respect for differences is on the rise, though its birthing is a struggle. As old patterns we've relied on give way and new patterns are yet to be born we find ourselves between one set of values and another. It is tempting to hold on to what we have known throughout our lives, including those ways of thinking and being that don't fit anymore but are familiar, taken for granted, and allow us to navigate without much thought or awareness. In many cases now we begin to see things differently. This indicates growth and is harbinger of a new phase, but it can be unsettling. What we need now is the willingness to hold onto hope. Dr. Richard Tarnas, a cultural historian, recently spoke to a group of Jungians in Portland. He said he has come to think of hope as a spiritual practice that draws on cosmic, divine and human sources to counteract our ordinary judgment of a situation. He says, "We descend daily into catastrophe, yet we are inalienably endowed with an ever-evolving aspiration to realize something beyond the already-actual. I believe that hope not only reaches out towards the possibility of a greater or higher or deeper dimension of being, it can also in some sense evoke and elicit that greater

dimension of being which is ultimately drawing us forth towards it.” Our challenge is in allowing ourselves to be drawn ever further through the prevailing darkness toward our highest good. As winter hovers near the horizon we move naturally toward a time of deeper reflection. We are invited into our inner sanctuary to align with the Source of all that is, the One Who Loves us and all creation. Enter God’s territory and contemplate Hope. Return to hope when nerves are jangled by the cycles of ‘breaking news.’ Again and again, as in meditation, return to hope. It is a profound spiritual practice and sits well in this month dedicated to thoughts and prayers of gratitude.

Happy Thanksgiving Sophia Christi,

Toni