

December 1, 2019

Dear Community,

The deepest mysteries we face in our lives occur at the intersection of endings and beginnings, of death and birth in all their many forms. When we enter the season of Advent we are invited into a time of reflection that takes account of where we've been and what is ending or needs to end in the way we live our lives so that what is 'new' can emerge. We stand at the threshold of change. Something mysterious is happening. Most of us can feel some movement within ourselves. Our thoughts and emotions are stirred by outer events or inner tensions we have no single name for, but something is stirring. Something is emerging. We may feel anxious or restless. We may feel irritation or overwhelm as the pressure within us, and the world around us, continues to build. Cosmic forces are at work, forces we can't control that are stirring the waters of our bodies as well as the body of the Earth, but those waters are not ready to break. Birth is not yet imminent. This season is given to waiting. It is the season of the Great Mother, pregnant and into her ninth month—uncomfortable, restless—waiting for that mysterious time of birthing to arrive. For us the image is that of Mary—waiting, preparing—listening to Spirit's voice within her own heart as well as in the hearts of her family. Elizabeth and Joseph share what they've heard. Mary and Joseph heed the signs of the times and leave their home even though she's near term. They leave their community and all they've known to walk, unaided and poor, toward a land promising safety. This ending, painful and frightening though it must be, is necessary for the security of the child that is to be born, and for the indispensable protection of an unfolding Mystery. The old life, the old ways, must make way for the new—and whatever 'the new' will be is, in this moment, utterly and completely unknown. So, like Mary, we wait. We prepare ourselves and our hearts for Spirit's movement over the waters of our individual and collective lives. We nurture our own patience and soothe our anxiety. We are able to do this because our faith reminds us that out of the darkness of the womb of Creation, the Great Mother of everything that exists, all life comes forth. Mary, mother of the Christ child, brings this home to us every year as we prepare ourselves in Advent for the re-emergence of Light. The natural cycles of sun, moon and earth bring us into yearly contact with these mysteries as we ritually celebrate light birthing from darkness, the mystery of life and the coming of Christ, birthing through us into a hope-starved world.

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

Mass Schedule This Month

Mass in Eugene will be Sunday, **December 8, 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.

Mass in Portland will be Saturday, **December 14, 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.

Christmas Eve Mass in Eugene Tuesday, December 24 at 9:00pm. This will be our 9th annual Christmas Eve celebration at the home of Dianne and Amanda. The address and directions are posted in the member portal of the Sophia Christi website. You may also request directions from Toni by responding to this email or by calling 503-286-3584. All are invited and welcome!

Upcoming Events:

Summary of November 16 Annual Meeting

The Parish Council met in Salem at Ike Box (still open, thankfully). It's a warm and lively place, with lots of people and activities. We meet in a private room, but we still heard a vibrant choir concert from the auditorium. November is our Annual Meeting, and we elect officers. SO SORRY to be losing Bruce and Dianne Turner! But we've added two new members--Josie Miranda of Eugene, and Rachel Wheeler of Portland. YAY! We reviewed the 2020 budget and feel great about expectations for a healthy balance of income and expenses. Our annual Retreat is coming up March 21, and planning for location and food is still underway. We do know, however, that Bill Zuelke and Val Hornburg will facilitate and are excited about that. Val is a Soul Collage practitioner and will be sharing that, which some of us (including me) are especially excited about. We fine-tuned the proposal we approved at our last meeting, involving an annual one-month vacation for Toni. When she picks the month, there will be three months of notice, and we'll make sure everyone is amply notified. –Judith Manning, Secretary

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. Stayton Methodist Church is welcoming us back for our second year, and Trexler Farms will again be catering lunch! Registration Forms will be available at January Masses. Cost will be \$50 again this year, which includes lunch.

Pastoral Update:

Introducing our Newest Eugene Council Member

My name is Josie Miranda and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve on the Sophia Christi parish council. I was introduced to Sophia Christi about 3 years ago and my life hasn't been the same since. As an infant I was baptized Catholic, but from age 5 on was raised a Jehovah's Witness. In my early 20s I became disillusioned with the faith and ended up rejecting it and religion in general. However, several years later I found myself struggling with a personal crisis that I couldn't manage on my own, and I began to understand that "something" important was missing from my life. Thankfully, it's when we find ourselves stumbling in the dark that God sends a bright lantern, and my lantern lit a path for me that led directly to Sophia Christi. I received communion for the first time and was confirmed in the presence of my Sophia Christi family in Eugene, and today I look forward to deepening my relationship with Christ through my service to this grace-filled parish that I have come to love so deeply. "Here I am. Send me!" – Isaiah 6:8 –Josie Miranda, Council Member

Members Corner -- Invitation

Is there something you are willing to share about your journey as a member of Sophia Christi and/or as a reader of this Newsletter? We would love to hear from you! Your

voice, your personal experience, your story of Spirit at work in your life are all part of the ministry of Sophia Christi. Over the past several years members of the Council have shared their reflections here, an example of which you see above. We would love to make this a regular feature in this monthly letter to the community. Simply send your paragraph or any questions you may have to Toni at this email address.

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.

On this first Sunday of Advent Paul says "You know the time in which we are living. It is now the hour for you to wake up!" Waking up from exclusive teachings of past eras, and traditions that no longer fit the times we are living happens slowly, in fits and starts. How many of us are awake and alert the moment our eyes open each morning? Jesus reminds us that in Noah's time, long ago, people were totally unconcerned about how they were living until the flood happened! The challenge is to wake up and recognize what Spirit is saying to us now. This is why Advent is a time for prayer and reflection, a time for listening to the deep stirrings of our heart, as well as the stirrings we perceive in the Soul of humanity. We are asked to prepare the way for something new. This new "something" requires our participation. There are things we must let go of, as individuals, nations and cultures—things holding us back, things keeping us stuck in adversarial child's play when our home planet is mirroring the chaos of competitive behavior taken to extremes. What is aching to be born is none other than the Christ child. Humanity is asked to carry this child to term and, when the time comes, to give birth. Until that time comes, everyone who resonates with this Archetypal story is asked, as Mary was, to conceive and carry the Christ-child and bring the Christ of Mercy, the Christ of Compassion, of Healing and Hope into the world in and through all that we think and do. To do this requires preparation as well as ongoing attention to our thoughts and actions. The words so gloriously sung by choirs around the world this Advent speak to that ultimate birthing of the Christ Isaiah so movingly portrays in our first reading next Sunday: "From Jesse's roots, a branch will blossom. The Spirit of God will rest there: a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and reverence for God... There will be no harm or destruction on all my holy mountain; for as waters fill the sea, so will the land be filled with knowledge of Our God."

Advent Blessings,

Toni