

January 5, 2020

Dear Community,

Entering the decade of the '20's' this New Year feels like entering the realm of science fiction. Maybe you need to be 'of a certain age' to have this experience. Maybe it is the number 2020 itself and what it means to those of us born the previous century, when space exploration began and '2001: A Space Odyssey' was dramatically futuristic. Maybe it has something to do with major planetary alignments this month that signal, for some, a significant astrological turn toward that once-trumpeted but still illusive Aquarian Age! Or maybe it portends the contentious journey of what might be the most critical election cycle any of us have yet weathered. Whatever the reason, there is a subtle heaviness in the air. Humanity seems to be holding its breath—waiting, praying, almost dreading the morning headlines of each new day. And as we make this turn into a new year our first celebration sets a pioneering tone. It is the feast of the Epiphany—the witnessed arrival of God-among-us. We begin our journey with the Magi following that bright, intriguing Star. Perhaps what we most need at this time of tumultuous entry into a new decade is this reminder that the Sacred Presence permeates our world and stands with us and within us at this time of heightened crisis. I imagine many of us would like to linger at the cradle, adoringly gazing into the face of innocence, while basking in a sense of peace, hope and humble belonging in a circle of love. But, without warning, we are thrust back into the darkness of revived and escalating conflict much like Joseph, told to make the arduous trek to Egypt with his family immediately because all hell is about to break loose in Jerusalem. The temptation to panic, or to succumb to paralyzing fear is with us. We might feel numb or refuse to recognize the pain we are in. Fear can escalate the desire to escape and lead to a mindless engagement with various addictions. We can busy ourselves beyond recognition in the many details before us that keep us off-balance and occupied with superficial affairs—minds and hands fitfully active while the world burns. Pretending things will 'return to normal soon' or that 'doom is on the horizon' lets us off the hook of feeling into and participating in the present moment as Souls who have chosen to be here in this moment of history for reasons and purposes that the Divine within us alone knows, guides and directs. We need not beseech our God to save us; we need to remember who we are—God-infused beings whose souls are aligned with the Divine Soul of the Universe—and pray for willingness do our part in knitting together the web of kinship that moves us into the peace and justice we long for. At the beginning of this month that begins this new decade, sitting on the precipice of one age ending and another sprouting unseen in the fertile darkness, we are invited to align with our Soul. Christ is born anew in that holy, timeless manger. The Angel, the Star of Bethlehem, has summoned us here to see for ourselves that God-is-with-us, right now. Feel into this truth. Embrace the Light of God's Presence at all costs, returning again and again each time the realization dims. We are here at this time to continue rekindling the flame of awareness that, in spite of whatever crisis emerges, God is with us and Divine Purpose is leading the way. Like Mary we are invited to keep all these things in mind, reflecting on them over and over in our hearts.

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, **January 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, **January 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:

First Council Meeting of the Year – January 18

This first meeting of 2020 will also be our first experiment using ZOOM as our method of connecting with each other across the distance of our two cities. We will be focusing on finalizing plans for the upcoming retreat in March, welcoming our new Portland Council Member—Rachel Wheeler—and accepting the nomination of Mike Newton as our new President. Portland Council members: Kathleen Glover, Mike Newton (President), Joy and Jim Learned, and Rachel Wheeler. Eugene Council members: Judith Manning Secretary, Carol Zolkoske, Jessica Katon (Treasurer) and Josie Miranda.

Registration for Annual Retreat 2020

Registration forms are available after Masses this month for our annual Lenten Retreat Saturday, March 21, from 10:00 to 5:00, with Mass beginning at 4:00. Stayton Methodist Church welcomes us back for the second year and Trexler Farms will again cater lunch. 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. Cost for the retreat is \$50, which includes lunch, and scholarships are available by talking to Toni.

Pastoral Update:

Introducing our Newest Portland Council Member

I first became a part of the Sophia Christi community when my husband, Winston, and I were living in Eugene during the years of 2015-2016. After moving to Portland, we found to our delight that the Sophia Christi community meets not far from where we are living. We value the warm welcomes we received from both the Eugene and Portland communities and we value continuing to be a part of a community dedicated to inclusion, justice, and God's love. Here in Portland, Winston works as a volunteer at a few different local library branches and I teach theology at the University of Portland. –Rachel Wheeler

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.

Isaiah's words to us next weekend can deepen our understanding of Christmas and echo the theme of Epiphany if we take seriously that God is with us. The 'old' Nativity story places us at the cradle and asks us to adore the infant Jesus as Savior of the world. This is a beginning stage of spiritual development, essential but meant to be transitory as it opens inner doors to continued growth. Vatican II made the assumption that we have grown to adulthood and are capable of an even deeper understanding leading toward creative partnership with Christ in building a just and compassionate world. The mystery of Incarnation then becomes our story and points toward the awe-inspiring and challenging truth that God took flesh at our birth no differently than God took flesh in Jesus. The difference is that Jesus seems never to have lost sight of the fact that the Divine Presence he called Abba lived in him, spoke through him, gave him a Purpose and guided his decisions. He lived in complete alignment with God's Will, which was also the Will of his own Soul—the two Wills, the two Souls, being One. The renewed meaning of the Christmas story from the perspective of spiritual adulthood doesn't simply invite us to the cradle, it takes us one more step by inviting us to picture ourselves in the cradle. What does it mean for our lives if we begin filtering our thoughts, attitudes, decisions and activities through the lens of aligning our will and desires with those of the very real presence of God within us? How might we change if we allow ourselves to be formed as Christ's hands, mind and heart in service of God's plan, without even knowing or needing to know that plan? When we hear Isaiah's words spoken next week, or read them ourselves, we will have been trained to hear them as references to Jesus: "Here is my Servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one, in whom I delight. I have endowed you with my Spirit...I, your God, have called you to serve the cause of right; I have taken you by the hand and formed you." These words apply to you, to each one of us. At the outset of this new and challenging year I invite you to pray and reflect on these words. Hear them addressed to you. Mull them over in your heart as Mary held the words of the angel in her own. Let them feed you and summon you to the holy purpose of your being that you might carry hope and light wherever you are in the days and months to come.

Blessings of Epiphany,

Toni