

February 2, 2020

Dear Community,

In the Oregonian yesterday there was a short one-page article focused on today's date: 02-02-2020. Aziz Inan, a University of Portland electrical engineering professor calls this a "ubiquitous palindrome date." The eight-figure date reads the same backward and forward all over the world, says Douglas Perry, article author. Since many countries put the day in front of the month, "Just how rare is it for a date to be an eight-digit palindrome around the globe" Perry asks? The last time it happened was in the 12th century according to Inan. That was 11-11-1111. Inan tells his students they're "lucky to have such a date in their lifetime" because it won't happen again until 12-12-2121, 101 years from now. Beyond that, a palindrome event won't happen until 03-03-3030, over 1,000 years in the future! "Palindromes have 'a bit of magic in them,'" Inan, who creates math puzzles for fun, believes. And as I reflect on this interesting phenomenon it seems a wee bit magical to me that, in these times of constant turmoil and division, we would be given a subtle reminder that we are actually ONE humanity and somehow, beneath all the anger, grief, pain, anxiety and hostility, we are deeply embedded in a Mysterious Guiding Force that wants us to know we are all held attentively in this evolving landscape together. In a deeply unconscious way, beneath our thoughts and emotional reactions, we actually do know we are individual parts of the "World Soul" since all that we see and know is part of God. At a soul level we are actually all on the same page, though it is nearly impossible to see this when our personalities and egos are so entangled in reptilian-brain thinking that is based in fear. As all meditative techniques do, the simple contemplation of 02-02-2020 calls us into a wordless space. In the mystery of today's numerical symmetry on a global scale, we rest in God's surprising mirror of the Divinely-infused Oneness of all humanity. The "I AM" Presence, the Divine Identity revealed to Moses at the burning bush, is the primordial seed of our own identity. A mantra I came across recently uses this holy Name as a meditative practice. Slowly, on the in-breath, say or think the word "I". Again slowly, on the outbreath, say or think the word "AM". Continue this process for several breaths. As you feel the air entering and leaving your body allow for a sense of connection with the Divine Presence within you. After a few or several minutes, without hurry, on the in-breath say or think the words "I AM". On the outbreath, say or think the word "Love." Continue this for as long as you like, allowing love to flow from your heart toward others in your life, toward others you are close to as well as, if you wish, toward those who are a challenge. Eventually, on the outbreath, send love into the entire world. Some see this meditation as a form of spiritual activism, because love is energy. It is dynamic. It is an energy that connects and heals division. It is the Divine signature of Creation, and it lives at the core of every being. When we send love toward others and into the world, we are re-invigorating the energetic pattern of wholeness and community resting deep in the heart of humanity where God is everlastingly present. And, just as importantly, we are bathing the fragmented parts of ourselves in the healing waters of God's overwhelming love for us, making us ever more capable of extending mercy and compassion to others.

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, **February 8**, 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, **February 9**, 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:

Lenten Retreat – March 21

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:

Summary of January 18 Council Meeting

On January 18, we had our Sophia Christi Council meeting via ZOOM, online. We liked seeing each other's faces instead of just voices, and we liked not having to drive to Salem! We'll still drive to Salem each November for the Annual Meeting, where we elect new members and officers. Mike Newton from Portland is our new Council President, and we are thrilled to have two new members--Josie Miranda from Eugene and Rachel Wheeler from Portland. Planning on the March 21 Retreat is going smoothly. The facilitators, Bill Zuelke and his wife Val Hornburg, are especially adept and creative. Please come; it's a rich and glowing experience and we all love it! --Judith Manning, Council Secretary

Witness at the U.S. Border

I was privileged to be able to attend a Call To Action Conference, "A Border Experience: Life on the Margins", in McAllen, TX in November. It was wonderful, very impressive and emotional. We met people from several different local groups to learn how they are working to help the refugees and asylum seekers. They wanted us to understand the tragedy of the situation and the desperation of the people. The Rio Grande River is beautiful and the portions of wall that we saw are ugly and separated us from the river.

Earlier this year the Department of Immigration passed new rulings misleadingly called "Migrant Protection Protocols" MPP. This has forced more than 47,000 Central American immigrants to wait indefinitely across the border in Mexico. Individuals have a legal right to seek asylum, no matter how they enter the country, under US and International laws. Instead they are given a court date, 6-12 months in the future, and forced back into Mexico, where there are few resources or facilities to support them.

We walked across the border bridge at Brownsville TX to Matamoras, Mexico. People are living there, crowded together in tents, on a hillside just over the bridge. The tent city has very few resources such as toilets, showers and clean water. Volunteer groups bring in food and some other necessities. We brought bedding and diapers. There is a little library for children and

we were told that there is also a school. Many children, talking and laughing, followed us as we walked through the camp. Adults were also friendly, and resourceful. There were clothes hanging to dry on fences and trees, and handmade tables and clay ovens to cook fish caught in the river. We were told there were 1500 people there, mostly families with children, waiting for their hearing. I've heard that the current count is up to 2,500. Many of the refugees have experienced violence, kidnapping and rape. Matamoros is under the control of violent gangs and considered one of the most dangerous places in the world.

We discussed what we had seen and learned and came up with suggestions about what we could do. At the top of everyone's list was the need to vote, and to encourage everyone we knew to vote. – Kathleen Glover, 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.

It is our ever-evolving ability to extend love, respect and compassion to others, to ourselves and to the Earth, that will allow us to be "the salt of the earth and light of the world" Jesus claims as our identity in next week's Gospel. "You are these things," he tells the disciples (us). To move into this truth and live from it we must dive beneath ego's self-absorption, which isn't easy and requires our attention and practice. Meditation, contemplation and centering prayer are all methods of stilling the "thinking" processes of the mind so God can "speak" in the silence. It is from this inner stillness that insights, images, promptings and stirrings emerge that are not attached to ego needs. You are a gift, a blessing, a beloved expression of God, whose "salt" and "light" are needed here and now in these transformative times. Where does God wish you to shine your light?

Blessings and peace,

Toni