

July 5, 2020

Dear Community,

I'm thinking of all of you as we move through this Independence Day weekend together, those who regularly participate in Sophia Christi Masses, those who have come to the summer picnics and annual Lenten retreats, and those of you who read this newsletter but who we may never see in person. A few of you in this last group have asked to be included in the Zoom invitation to our online Masses recently, and this is a delightful reminder that so many of you remain connected through the invisible web of these writings. Greetings and blessings to all of you reading these words. In an echo of that first century movement that later became known as "Christianity," we now rely on the 21st century version of staying in touch without the great benefit of physical presence. Email, phone calls, letters, even Zoom give us the tools for remote connection. It is our new normal for now, less satisfying than holding hands, singing together and talking face-to-face, but how fortunate we are that meetings and even liturgies can happen virtually, and not only happen, but happen in meaningful ways. In Jesus' day, in Paul's day, travel from one village to another took hours, if not days, and travel from one country to another could take weeks, months. A letter took a long time to arrive. Now, while subject to restrictions on personal contact, we can see each other's faces, hear each other's voices, and discuss important matters as though we are sitting in the same room even if we are oceans apart. With the click of a button on a computer, a tablet or a simple cell phone screen we can share documents in real time and send a letter that arrives instantaneously. The seeds of connectivity have been sown throughout the world. Some have produced fruit that breaks down once formidable barriers; but many others poison minds and hearts, destroying any sense of solidarity. We celebrate our "Independence" as a country while divided as a nation. Poisonous word-seeds sow distrust, disgust and hatred across the land, even around the globe, tearing us from each other, tearing the body of "us" apart. Jesus' words in Matthew's Gospel next Sunday gives us a lens through which to view our present circumstance: "When people hear the message of the reign of God—the reign of justice, peace, freedom, equality, respect for all people and all Creation—without understanding it, the evil one comes along and snatches away what was sown in their hearts. Some receive this message and are thrilled by it at first, but since they accepted it only superficially it soon enough gives way to another distraction. Some hear the message, but their personal anxieties and the lure of wealth choke off its life-giving power, and they turn their minds instead toward satisfying their individual needs. Those who hear and understand the message are those who accept its claim on their time, attention and energy. They live into the work of strengthening the bonds of trust, care, interdependence and solidarity among all members of the family of God." We connect with each other for encouragement and support during this time when the temptation to despair may be strong, our belief in God's presence may be challenged, and our need for good soil and inspiring seeds is highest. Jesus reminds us that we are that soil. We are receiving those seeds. We are needed here and now. Open your eyes, ears and hearts that you might be healed, he tells us, so you can serve the cause of justice-building and peace-building that will anchor God's loving embrace of everyone and everything in our world.

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

Online Mass Schedule Continues This Month

Mass via Zoom will be Saturday, **July 11**, at **5:00pm**. We move into Ordinary Time which continues through summer and fall. We celebrate Masses online every 2nd Saturday-of-the-month until meeting in person no longer threatens the lives and health of our communal family.

Pastoral Update:

If you have regularly participated in Sophia Christi liturgies either in Eugene or Portland during the past year or have recently requested a Zoom invitation to our online Mass, you will automatically receive a Zoom invitation this month. It will be sent to you Friday, July 10, for our July 11th celebration. If you have not been involved in the past but would like to participate in the online Mass, let Toni know by responding to this email no later than Wednesday, July 8, and a Zoom invitation will be sent to you Friday as well.

Summary of June 20 Council Meeting

We had our second successful ZOOM Council Meeting last month! We're a vital, involved group, with Sophia Christi's interests foremost in our hearts and minds. We were saddened to learn that two of our Portland Members, Jim & Joy Learned, have resigned from the Council. Their life is busy with health and family needs. We're so grateful for their long years of service and thank them from the bottom of our hearts. This leaves us with the task of finding at least two more members, ideally one from Eugene and one from Portland. Please give some thought to joining the Council and helping Sophia Christi serve SO MANY, both inside and outside our community! We discussed changes in contributions since moving to online liturgies and note that we are doing pretty well. Donations are down but so are some of our expenses. Many of you responded to the survey from our Communications Team (Thank you Josie and Rachel!). Thank all of you who responded with your thoughts, feelings and suggestions. We are exploring new ways to meet everyone's needs. Our CARE TEAM is exploring how to find those of us who are struggling, needing help, needing contact, so please let someone know if you hear of an unmet need in the community. ZOOM Masses are going well, and a decision was made to continue them through September. We will see where things are at that point with the pandemic-caused shutdown and re-evaluate. Our prayers go out to all of you! –Judith Manning, Secretary

Zoom Community Gathering – Saturday, July 25

*As you know, the Sophia Christi communications team recently completed a survey to help us determine how we might keep the community connected during this time. After compiling and reviewing the data it became abundantly clear that there is a great need and desire for opportunities to connect outside of our monthly Mass. With this in mind, we've decided to start with two initiatives for now: hosting monthly Zoom community gatherings and developing our Facebook site. We'll have more information on our Facebook space in the coming weeks, but for now we invite you to participate in our first Zoom community get together on **Saturday, July 25, from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm**. During this first Zoom gathering we'll spend some time getting to know each other a little better, and we'll explore ideas on how we can make the best use of our Zoom time together. Toni will send out the Zoom invitation and link on Thursday, July 23. In the meantime, if*

you have questions please contact Josie at Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com. –Josie Miranda, Communications Team

Care Team

If you are interested in being a part of the Care Team or you have a need that the Care Team might respond to, please let Rachel Wheeler or Pastor Toni know. Rachel can be reached at rastonwinchel@hotmail.com --Rachel Wheeler

Members Corner – Sharing Reflections?

The Spirit speaks through all of us and your experiences, questions and insights are important. If Sophia nudges you to reach out to the wider community, please send a few sentences or a paragraph or two to Toni at this email address for inclusion in our next newsletter.

Website

Outreach has always been part of the mission of Sophia Christi. We are grateful for the website monitoring and management skills showing their faces at this much-needed time. If you are interested in being involved in this project, please contact Toni. Also remember that the newsletter and current homily are generally posted on the website each month, as are all upcoming events. Our web address is www.sophiachristi.org

A continuing pastoral invitation—In the normal course of life I have the opportunity to meet with you personally when a pastoral issue arises, or you want/need spiritual support. But we are somewhere outside the range of ‘normal’ now. Please let me know if I can assist you in this strange time we are living through. I am still available by phone (503-286-3584) and you can still reach me through this email address. Feel free to use either one.

I’ve been thinking about “independence” a lot this weekend. The word is aligned with sovereignty, autonomy, self-rule and self-determination and these fit with a national holiday that celebrates freeing a people from the yoke of a colonizing power. Our Declaration of Independence codifies that intention and gives us a glimpse of what it means to be “dedicated to the proposition that all people are created equal.” In another set of meanings, however, this pivotal word ‘independence’ falls under the category of self-sufficiency. As I look at that list, there are seeds of a struggle that become clearer now in this era of pandemic as it interfaces with cries for racial justice. Synonyms pop up that explain a pattern of disconnection, words like self-reliance, self-determination and individualism. They highlight a choice that lay hidden in that founding document, one that would lead us into a dangerously individualistic future. But the seeds of freedom and justice for everyone were there as well, offering a path to unity, to a truly just and free society. What we are seeing in the adamant refusal to wear masks, for example, and in reactive demands for ‘individual rights’ over and above the common good is an exercise of individualism posing as a voice for freedom. Liberty is a word that refers to the collective because no one is truly free if anyone of us is oppressed. Personal freedom stands in opposition to the reign of God when it becomes a heedless

disregard for the safety and well-being of others. It shows a lack of concern that exemplifies separation of oneself from a connection to the whole family. There is an emerging understanding that we live in an interdependent world, where every form of life supports every other form, including the life and health of the planet that sustains us. We are part of one another and no one is or can be truly self-sufficient in the deepest meaning of that term. We depend on the earth for food, air, water. We depend on others to harvest crops we can't grow ourselves, package them and bring them to market. There is an implied responsibility to each other in that word 'independence,' because we do and always will depend on nature, as well as each other, for the basics of survival. "The secrets of the reign of God are there for you to know," Jesus tells the disciples. "If you have ears to hear, then listen." God's life breathes within each of us, gives life to the earth and all her creatures, and connects us inextricably to each other, the planet and all that is. The connections and connecting links are sacred. May we, as a people who yearly Declare our Independence from Oppressors and Oppression, open our eyes and our hearts to the truths we hold and cherish. And may we, who call ourselves Christian, attune our hearts to the words of the Gospel that we and all people might be healed.

Blessings and peace to all of you,

Toni