

August 2, 2020

Dear Community,

This month marks our 13th anniversary as a community. I tend to become more reflective when August comes around, remembering where we were before we received our name, when the possibility of continuing to gather beyond that first August Mass wasn't even a plan. I say "received" because our name, Sophia Christi, was revealed more than it was chosen. From the beginning it spoke of Mystery shrouded in a feminine garment and anchored in faith that Christ was and is present in our liturgy, our Eucharist and our community. Unlike the Christ, around whom an entire theology is constructed, Sophia was largely buried in Gnostic myth and obscured by early church writers fearful of mysticism and the 'authority' it gave to an unmediated experience of God. Like Spirit, however, Wisdom is available to everyone of "God's children" equally. She cannot be contained within a creed or structure. The only restriction lies in our ability to hear Her voice. We face this challenge daily because Her voice is 'whispered' in the complex movements and interactions of our ordinary lives. Where is Wisdom in this global pandemic, we might ask? Are we aware of Her Presence as She opens our hearts and minds to the reality that we are One Family, and that what happens to one of us, in truth, happens to us all? As I walk through my neighborhood, I am more aware of others than I ever was before. I notice the person walking toward me, half a block away, as she steps into the street to provide safe distance for us both. Later I do the same, moving into the roadway so a man with a baby stroller can remain on the sidewalk. We adjust our movements almost rhythmically. It's a dance step we're learning together, a gentle reminder that Sophia is here, enhancing our sense of connection by teaching us to dance. Then she reaches into our collective history and steps into the dear black body of George Floyd, focuses the lens of our many screens, and displays his gruesome murder before our unbelieving eyes. Her shadowy presence ignites a renewed struggle for racial justice as Her light inspires peaceful protests against police violence in Portland and in cities across the nation, particularly the brutalizing violence against people of color. She is there in the 'Wall of Moms' who have placed their bodies between protestors and combat-clad federal agents, protecting others with their own vulnerability. She is there in the medics who, having served in various war zones, come to the aid of the injured, those wounded by 'non-lethal' munitions and tear gas cannisters that fly into the crowd. They are joined by nurses and doctors who risk their own safety to care for the fallen. The hands of Holy Wisdom are everywhere, caring for Her beloved people, as they (and we) work toward healing the injustice of centuries. Sophia Christi, as a community, lives in witness to the presence of Wisdom and Compassion alive and active in our world. We who have adopted Her as our Patroness, who see Her as Divine, who recognize Her existence in God, with God—as the playfully creative Face of God present before the Cosmos itself was birthed into being—we are here because She called us into being. We have a part to play in this drama of life. As we welcome Her presence She inhabits our community. On this, our 13th Anniversary, we commit ourselves to Her once again. We follow where She leads without knowing where we are going. She called us into being and named our community. We belong to Her. We belong to Christ.

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, **August 8**, at **5:00pm**. This month we celebrate our 13th Anniversary as a community. Our Masses are 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, August 7, for our August 8th Liturgy. 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, August 5 and a Zoom invitation will be sent to you Friday as well.

Second Social Gathering – Saturday, August 22

Having heard how much we miss seeing each other, and miss casual conversations during potlucks, the Council decided to create an opportunity for sharing in the only “safe” format available during this ongoing pandemic. Thank goodness for computers, phones and Zoom! We can see each other’s faces, hear each other’s voices and spend social time together despite the distances required in this not-so-normal present! Come and gather with your community again **Saturday, August 22, from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm**. We will continue getting to know each other and share a little of what’s happening in our lives. Toni will send out the Zoom invitation and link on Thursday, August 20. In the meantime, if you have questions please contact Josie, at Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com.

First Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together a Success!

On Saturday, July 25th, we held our first Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together for the combined Eugene/Portland community. More than a dozen Sophia Christi members participated, and we had a wonderful time with lots of sharing and great conversation. These monthly Zoom gatherings are an opportunity for us to spend an hour getting to know each other a little, build connections between us, share our joys and challenges, and talk about the ways in which our faith helps each of us move through our daily lives. We hope to see you at the next gathering on August 22nd from 5:00 to 6:00pm! —Josie Miranda, Sophia Christi Communication 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

Council Member Reflection

I could tell that my ninth-grade algebra teacher, Mr. Serrano, was exasperated. I had stayed after school that day for help with my algebra homework and was hung up on a particular

algebraic axiom that I no longer remember (in mathematics, an axiom is a statement accepted as true without requiring proof). I kept asking Mr. Serrano why that particular axiom represented whatever it was that it represented, and the question was preventing me from moving forward on my algebra homework. Finally, Mr. Serrano said, "You can't ask why, you just have to accept." Some forty years later, I find myself in a similar situation with my spirituality, specifically concerning the notion of grace. For several months now I've struggled with trying to understand what grace is, and why I should deserve it. However, what I've come to realize is that I've allowed my intellectual desire to understand the "what" and "why" of grace to interfere with my simply accepting and experiencing its presence in my life, just as my obsession with understanding the "why" behind that algebraic axiom interfered with my ability to successfully complete my algebra homework. Grace is an axiom of Faith, a powerful, divine manifestation of God's love, gifted to each of us for no other reason than that God wishes it. I don't need to ask "what" or "why", I just need to accept this blessed gift, and remember that at every moment of my existence God is lovingly, actively with me. —Josie Miranda, Council Member, Eugene

Member's Corner – Sharing Reflections

Our stories are important. Our experiences, questions and insights are personal to us, yet they are also, in many ways, similar enough to those of others that "story" is what we come together to hear and to share, and what we miss in these times of isolation. This space in the newsletter is here for the sharing of our stories, connecting us with each other as we navigate the upending of our lives. This, our first submission, is from Dianne Dugaw of Eugene:

Recently I spend time each night with a comet. Just below the Big Dipper, it shimmers red, white, and blue, signaling a mysterious hope and power from beyond—color-coded for our troubled country. Quirky and comforting, this visitant appears to our world only once every 6,766 years, and comes to us from the Big Bang, the beginning of everything. As I write, it has a few days more with us. The Near-Earth Object Wide-field Survey Explorer, a telescope, discovered this comet on March 27th, and astronomers named it NEOWISE. Perfect! I have no trouble translating "NEO-WISE" as New-Wisdom—Sophia, even. Visiting from the beginning of everything, glittering in colors of red, white, and blue, I heard her say: "See the BIG picture! Remember, you yourselves are made of stars! You have in you the beginning of everything!" --Dianne

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.

Anniversaries, graduations, weddings and milestones happen regardless of the larger social environment in which we live. But as a faith community, as people looking toward Spirit for guidance in the face of human dilemmas and challenges, how do we look through the lens of faith to not only gain perspective, but to also embrace our times, remember our mission and re-commit to our purpose as a community? Hearing and feeling the anger of my sisters and brothers demonstrating downtown, watching the spin on issues that focus attention on violence while a of wall of moms courageously attempts to bring the face of mercy and vulnerability to the front lines, I am aware of how vulnerable we all are. All of us are wounded by the injustice perpetrated against the bodies, minds and souls of the most maligned, marginalized and mistreated among us. Sophia, our patroness, opens wide her arms to embrace all of this and all of us. She “stands at the gates of the city” beckoning us to see with Her eyes and open our hearts that we might become the peaceful people we are meant to be. There is purpose in our being present at this time and place of history. No one is here by accident. As people of faith we try to listen for that gentle whisper that once drew Elijah, the prophet, out of the cave he’d sought for shelter on God’s holy mountain. What is God asking of us as we step into our 14th year? Together we live into this question with Wisdom-Sophia as our guide.

Happy Anniversary, Sophia Christi,

Toni