

September 6, 2020

Dear Community,

We are rounding the corner into fall as we celebrate “Labor” this weekend. We honor the tremendous effort and unknown sacrifices so many people have been making on our behalf—in hospitals and clinics, in grocery stores, restaurants, orchards and farms, in food production and distribution centers across this land. We recognize and praise our laborers, and all our “laborings” to keep each other going through this pandemic and the chaos stretching from border to border and sea to sea. We see the unique and creative ways we have collectively found to accompany the sorrowing and the dying as well as to celebrate the joyous milestones so many have met and crossed during this strange and awkward year. Through our combined efforts, our many “labors” of love, we struggled, inch-by-inch, and have arrived at this day that so casually marks the end of summer or beginning of another school year. In so doing it loses meaning and misses the point. “Labor” is a sacred word. It is the foundational experience of offering our life energy to cherish, nurture and sustain God’s world. It is the primal act of birthing, of giving our bodies over to the arduous task of bringing into form a “new life” through our sweat and our tears. “Labor” is holy. In it we have purpose; through it we are meant to build, support and renew our collective home and the filaments of connection that bind us to each other and to all of life. It is our combined labors we rely on each and every day to provide for our most basic needs. The food we can’t grow ourselves comes through other hands that till the soil, plant the seed, harvest the grains, transport the produce, stock the shelves and open doors to give us access. Our water is the gift of earth’s life-giving processes, collected in reservoirs and wells, sent through human-made pipes and faucets to quench our thirst and keep us alive. All that we have is a gift from our glorious mother Earth channeled through the wise and often back-breaking work of our sisters and brothers. All we need to survive on this luscious planet is provided for our collective benefit. Working with those raw materials we provide sustenance and protection for each other, as well as offer beauty in the form of creative and unifying expressions to feed our flagging spirits. The word “labor” is typically used this weekend in reference to “workers” in industry, manufacturing, agriculture, extraction and all that contributes to the GDP of our nation. But “labor” includes the contributions of so many who provide for the daily needs of a complex society, from the most basic to the most obscure. It includes all of us, all of our work, all of our planning, organizing and implementing of ideas that foster the well-being of this earthly enterprise. We are interdependent creatures, made so by our Creator, so that we must rely on Earth’s provisions, our plant and animal friends and each other, for our survival as well as our personal growth and spiritual transformation. Our “labor” is the way Spirit enters the world in tangible form. Drawing on the seed of God planted within each of us, we “labor” in birthing God’s life and loving intention into the world. Let us honor all of our labors this weekend to bring peace, understanding, genuine concern, truth, justice and wholeness into the second decade of this arduous and transformative 21st century.

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, **September 12**, at **5:00pm**. 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, September 11, for our September 12th 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, September 9th and a Zoom invitation will be sent to you Friday as well.

Third Social Gathering – Saturday, September 26

Come and be in conversation with other Sophia Christi members in a casual Zoom setting again this month. We will meet up **from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm on Saturday, September 26** and continue getting to know each other. It's a great opportunity to make connections within our wide community circle. We can share a little of what's happening in our lives, see that we're not alone in feeling worried or unsettled, and receive the support and encouragement a loving community of peers can provide. Toni will send out the Zoom invitation and link on Thursday, September 24. In the meantime, if you have questions please contact Josie, at Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com.

Revived Sophia Christi Facebook Page and a New Group for SC Members!

The Communications Team is offering two more ways to stay connected:

First, if you are already a Facebook user consider visiting the Sophia Christi Catholic Community Facebook page (at this link <https://www.facebook.com/Sophia-Christi-Catholic-Community-223153761191386>) and "liking" it by clicking the blue button labeled "Like." This will allow you to receive news and announcements from Sophia Christi on your own Facebook feed.

Second, consider joining the "Group" page (at this link <https://www.facebook.com/groups/806948603569813>) by clicking the blue button labeled "Ask to Join." This is a private page, so will consist only of SC members who want to share information and conversation about our own lives and concerns.

Finally, if you are interested in attending a tutorial on how to join or use Facebook and get connected in either of these ways, we will be scheduling such a learning session through Zoom in upcoming weeks. Stay tuned & let us know if you have any questions. Thanks! Rachel Wheeler (rastonwinchel@hotmail.com) and Josie Miranda (Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com)

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

School has begun again for me at the University of Portland. We are 100% online this semester. To my relief, many of my students seem excited to be together again and to be intellectually

challenged, even as they are challenged in so many other less desirable ways. I have been blessed by the generosity and flexibility of my students, even as they raise important questions about the relevance of our work together in a time so politically charged and in a time of tremendous awakening to racial injustice. The weekend before classes began, I lay in the yard under one of the fruit trees and put my book aside to grow more aware of the sounds of insects buzzing around me, birds calling, and the wind moving the leaves in the trees. So many sounds of the neighborhood and the natural world surrounded me as I closed my eyes and felt myself just another member of the community, with nothing to do except be. This felt a very graced moment for me of relinquishing control of all the demands that would come at me as school was starting and of relishing the experiential knowledge of being a part of things, with nothing to earn--a consciousness merely alive and aware. My hope is for all of us to have experiences like this, of knowing ourselves unconditionally beloved of the Sacred Presence with us always. – Rachel Wheeler, Council Member

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, insights and snippets of experience to help us know we are held by invisible threads of love, and we are not alone. See examples from this and previous newsletters and consider sending a short paragraph of your own for inclusion in next month's edition. Deadline is October 2nd.

Website

Outreach has always been part of the mission of Sophia Christi. We are grateful for the website monitoring and management skills being offered 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.

Throughout the summer our second reading each Sunday has been taken from Paul's letter to the Romans. Today we would hear these words: “Love never does any wrong to the neighbor, hence love is the fulfillment of the Law.” Though absent from the lectionary, the next line reads: “Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.” These words seem more timely this year than perhaps they ever have before. I sit here in a city besieged by violence on a nightly basis for the last 100 days. What began as a protest against law enforcement targeting people of color, and most specifically black bodies, has become a brutal conflict of ideologies fueled by rage, fear and racially motivated hatred. Jesus' foundational commandment that we Love one another seems to have been thrown out the window in

this “Christian” nation, in favor of angry, even lethal, confrontation. But now is the moment for us to wake from sleep. We will not have read the words Paul wrote that begin chapter 14, but they seem especially significant in our current political environment. “Be open to those with different ideas,” he writes, “but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while others eat only vegetables. Those who eat everything must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them all. Who are you to pass judgment? Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. All are fully convinced in their own minds. If we are alive we are living in God. Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another and resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in someone else’s way.” It is time to wake up and recognize that we are all part of a larger-than-life Cosmic rearrangement of the systems and antiquated ideas that have blinded us to the wholeness of this Divine enterprise we are all part of. We are one people, one planetary community, totally interdependent and each contributing what we have to offer. We know what selfishness looks like; we see it in ourselves. We know greed and anger. We know hopelessness and fear. We know how necessary it is to restrain these ‘lower’ tendencies because they destabilize our relationships and damage ourselves, our families and our society. Waking from sleep, seeing these tendencies in ourselves and choosing to look for the Divine hidden beneath opinions and fear we encounter is to walk in step with the only Law we are asked to follow. It is the hardest work we will ever do, truly a Divinely-inspired labor. It is time for us to wake up and embrace the challenge of learning to love each other, while also learning to love what God is doing in and through the ridiculous craziness of our life and our times.

Blessings to all, and may love reign in our hearts through the weeks and months ahead,

Toni