

October 4, 2020

NOTICE: Our new Facebook page is up and running thanks to the Communications Team. People are posting information and conversations are beginning. See below for instructions about how to participate.

Dear Community,

As I listened to those of us who had gathered for our second Zoom Social event last Saturday what struck me was the amount of grief and fear so many, maybe even most of us, are feeling as this tumultuous and painful year rounds the bend toward Election Day. Collectively we are tracking so many dire issues—global warming, betrayal of democracy, racism and police brutality, immigration tragedies, homelessness, fires, gun violence, unemployment. Many of us feel disoriented and isolated from one another as the pandemic silently disrupts what was once ‘normal’ life and the nation slogs its way toward November with a thimble-full of hope in a deluge of foreboding. Fear is in the air and survival instincts push our minds toward futile attempts to “think this through” in order to find “solutions” that could protect us from disaster. Immersed in this collective soup it is natural to tell each other what we’ve heard, what we think and how we feel. We need outlets for our stampeding emotions as they overwhelm our senses. But the fact is that fear begets fear, and without the balance-arm of faith we can end up paralyzed with uncontrollable anxiety. What does it mean to have faith in times like these? Richard Rohr sent a message last month to all who receive his daily meditations. It was marked “Urgent Guidance.” In it he said: “We are without doubt in an apocalyptic time (the Latin word *apocalypsis* refers to an urgent unveiling of an ultimate state of affairs)....Somehow our occupation and vocation as believers in this sad time must be to first restore the Divine Center by holding it and fully occupying it ourselves....What other power do we have now? All else is tearing us apart, inside and out, no matter who wins the election or who is on the Supreme Court. We cannot abide in such a place for any length of time or it will become our prison.”

Anxiety can be a prison if we allow it to take control of our lives. Faith is not only a counter-weight; it is a centering activity. It brings us home, takes us into the Mystery of God’s presence alive in all the circumstances of our troubled world. Faith invites us to look deeper, to dive beneath the stream of pronouncements and bickering voices and recognize the shadowy contours of Wisdom at play. She is moving among us, waking us up from our slumbering habits, presenting mirrors of our own insecurities, inviting changes in how we think, what we project onto others, how we act in unloving ways. She shows us our negativity then widens the scope and displays the results showing us scene after scene of suffering and despair. “Is this what you want?” she asks. “This isn’t who you are!” Rohr tells us to “stand as a sentry at the door of your senses for these coming months so the ‘blood-dimmed tide’ (W.B.Yeats, Poem “Second Coming) cannot make its way into your soul. If you allow it for too long,” he says, “it will become who you are.” So might we pledge to do as he advises? Shall we stand as sentry at the door of our mind, intentionally turning away angry, fearful, hateful thoughts and replacing them with prayers for healing. What if we remember Paul’s words each morning, that “for those who love God all things work together unto good.” (Rom 8:28). Let’s turn our hearts toward love when we wish to blame, toward understanding when fearful or angry.

We are God-bearers at our core and a work-in-progress at the same time. All of us, as individuals and as a society, have that spark of Divinity within us. In prayer we call it forth. May Wisdom rise in the heart of humanity and heal our troubled 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, **October 10**, 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, October 9, for our October 10th 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, October 7th and a Zoom invitation will be sent to you Friday as well.

Third Social Gathering – Saturday, October 24

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, October 24** 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, October 22. In the meantime, if you have questions please contact Josie, at Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com.

Summary of September 19 Council Meeting

We met via Zoom, which we are getting quite comfortable with. We discussed our two previous Zoom Social Gatherings and the third coming up in two weeks. All of Sophia Christi is invited to attend these Gatherings, and we hope to see more people each month. We are also proud to have a loving and committed Care Team. If you are interested in being part of the Care Team, or if you would appreciate some caring help, contact Rachel Wheeler at rastonwinchel@hotmail.com or at 503-285-0287. We are updating our Facebook page, which you can read about below. We're including a tutorial on how to get on Facebook (public and private pages). We would love to have more lectors/readers for our Zoom Masses. If you're interested, let Toni know. Each year in the fall we ask you to fill out Pledge cards so we can begin creating our budget for the following year. You will be getting a letter from our Treasurer, Jessica, and from Toni, with pledge cards attached. We are grateful for your support and so pleased we can continue to be Sophia Christi together during these difficult times. —Judith Manning, Council Secretary

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

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 November 6th.

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.

Today's reading from Paul to the Phillipians begins: "Dismiss all anxiety from your minds." Easier said than done, of course, but Paul offers a method. "Present your needs to God in every form of prayer" he says. Every thought, every feeling, attitude and sentiment can become prayer when we notice what's happening and direct our internal experience toward God. We hand it over to the Unfathomable Mystery, again and again,

relying on the Love-Energy that fills and sustains all life in the Universe to bring order out of chaos both inside our own hearts and outside in the world. We don't act when we are afraid we react. Prayer frees us from the illusion of control and makes space for Wisdom to usher in a moment of ease or, sometimes, to nudge us in a direction we would never have considered. So first we pray as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane, handing fear over to God so we can move and act with some measure of freedom. No amount of thinking and worrying can change structural racism, a warming ocean or voter suppression. These social and planetary issues are bigger than us. At the same time they require all of us to be as clear of ego and as calm and wise as our inner Sage would have us be if we are to assist in altering the course of history to move our world in the direction of health, unity, wholeness and inner/outer peace. What we each can do, personally and immediately to help generate this course correction, is spelled out beautifully by Paul in these words: "Finally, my sisters and brothers, your thoughts should be wholly directed to all that is true, all that deserves respect, all that is honest, pure, admirable, decent, virtuous, or worthy of praise. Live according to what you have learned and accepted, what you have heard [Jesus] say and seen [Jesus] do. Then will the God of peace be with you."

I wish to end these thoughts today with Richard Rohr's words since they capture the urgency many of us feel on the cusp of a critical national election:

*"If you will allow, I recommend for your spiritual practice for the next four months that you impose a moratorium on exactly how much news you are subject to—hopefully not more than an hour a day of television, social media, internet news, magazine and newspaper commentary, and/or political discussions. It will only tear you apart and pull you into the dualistic world of opinion and counter-opinion, not Divine Truth, which is always found in a bigger place
You have much to gain now and nothing to lose. Nothing at all.
And the world—with you as a stable center—has nothing to lose.
And everything to gain."*

May love reign in our hearts through the months ahead,

Toni