

December 6, 2020

NOTICE: The Members Facebook page is up and running thanks to the Communications Team. See below for instructions about how to participate.

Dear Community,

All of 2020 has been something of an Advent journey: waiting for God to be born anew in the midst of a worldwide pandemic and national torment; waiting in hope for a vaccine to overcome a deadly virus; waiting for the lungs of the earth to be freed of danger; waiting to breathe safely in each other's presence again; waiting for unity, for compassion, for real justice and true peace—waiting for the Holy One to be born in us anew. And all the while, amidst all the waiting, we have watched the tightly woven fabric of society unravel before our eyes, seen so much death, felt such deep feelings of helplessness, despair, trauma and grief landing in our families, neighborhoods, cities—in our minds and hearts. We've done our best to keep ourselves and our loved ones afloat on such a rocky sea. It has been a year of watching the dissolution of an age, and of a way of thinking and living that has run its course. As the year comes to a close we add the final lines of a book we didn't know we were writing, close the document, and bring our cursor to a blank page. Sitting before it, the image of John moves across the desert sands of our inner vision. And far in the distance, beyond and behind him, the ancient figure of Isaiah bellows a timeless message that John passionately echoes in his day: "Prepare in the wilderness, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." We have been living in a modern wilderness without knowing, for the most part, that its structured emptiness has been crushing our people and our souls. It has taken a virus for us to begin to see how connected our bodies are to one another, that my breath is your breath and your breath is mine. More of us than ever before are waking up to the fact that all of life, all of creation, is interdependent, and that we have both a personal and collective responsibility that goes hand-in-hand with our inherent freedom as daughters and sons of the one God. But we are still 'in' the wilderness and can't see where we are going. The highway that will take us from here to that place where "the glory of the Most High God will be revealed, and all humankind will see" is yet to be built. The old road has disappeared in the sandstorm. The old book is finished and closed. A new life is coming into this world and the debris of the past must be cleared away. It is a past of misbelieved self-sufficiency and fearful tribalism. It is a past of privileged opportunity and demeaning marginalization. It is a godless wasteland we are invited, encouraged, to leave behind. Thirsting for connection, treasuring our social nature and our need to touch and be touched, to work alongside, to laugh and speak without masks and physical barriers, we are now better prepared for working together than we were twelve months ago. So we begin to ponder the first sentence of a new human manuscript by bringing all voices to the table, including the voice of the Earth and the plants and creatures we depend on for our own existence. We prepare, in this current wilderness, the building of a new thoroughfare that will lead us straight into each other's arms. It is there, finally, we will experience the physical presence of a loving, nurturing God.

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, **December 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.

Christmas Eve—We will celebrate Mass via Zoom on **December 24** at **5:00pm**. For the last nine years many of us have gathered at the home of Dianne and Amanda in Eugene to continue the ancient tradition of ‘Midnight Mass’ that began, it is believed, under Pope Sixtus III in 430 A.D. Like so many churches we altered the time and began at 9pm in years past. This year, our 10th, all of Sophia Christi will be able to participate online, and we will alter the time once again. “Midnight Mass” will begin at 5pm.

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 Masses, you will automatically receive a Zoom invitation this month for our liturgy on the 12th as well as for the Mass on Christmas Eve. Invitations will be sent Friday, December 11th, and again on Wednesday, the 23rd. If you have not been involved in the past but would like to participate in the online liturgies, let Toni know by responding to this email no later than Wednesday, December 9th.

Summary of November 21 Council Meeting

The Parish Council met Saturday, November 21 for its Annual Meeting. Judith Manning, who served as Council Secretary for nine years, submitted her resignation in October. Rachel Wheeler was unanimously elected as our new Secretary. Deep appreciation was expressed for Judith's years of service. Mike Newton was elected to a new term as Council President and Jessica Katon to a new term as Treasurer. All are grateful for Mike's expert leadership, Jessica's financial expertise and the willingness of both to continue serving in these capacities. We also welcomed Eugene member, Anna Lankutis, as a new Council Member. Reports from the communications and care teams were offered. The use of Zoom for liturgies and social gatherings was discussed. Looking to the future: we hope to learn to use Facebook more creatively to connect members there. Kathleen Glover is going to mobilize the care team, and we agreed a Christmas Eve Zoom Mass would be welcomed; we brainstormed ideas to make it happen. - Submitted by Parish Council Secretary, Rachel Wheeler

No Social Gathering in December

Ordinarily we gather the community for a virtual ‘social’ mid-way between one month’s liturgy and the next, but this month the date for that gathering would fall on Saturday, the 26th—Christmas weekend. Our next social gathering therefore will take place in January, a few days after the inauguration of Joe Biden as our new President.

Sophia Christi Facebook Page and “Group” Page for SC Members

The SC members are connecting with each other and posting resources on the “Group” page. To join the conversation:

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.

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 contact Kathleen Glover or Pastor Toni.

Council Member Reflection

I originally began writing this reflection on the first Sunday of Advent, and immediately I found myself struggling. I wanted to write about the joy and promise of Advent, and yet, looking back at the past 12 months, joy and promise seemed like abstractions completely disconnected from the unprecedented challenges of the year 2020. I couldn't break through the block, so I put my reflection aside until now, hours after I experienced something of an epiphany while walking across the OSU campus. What came to me was this: Yes, 2020 was a challenging year. However, walking beside me, guiding me through the darkness, carrying me when exhaustion took hold, was Christ. I cannot imagine how much worse the past year would have been for me had I not allowed Him into my heart. So this Advent, in addition to celebrating Jesus's birth and the promise of His return, I also give thanks for His everyday presence in my life. I wish each of you a blessed, grace-filled Advent and Christmas. --Josie Miranda, Sophia Christi council member.

Member's Corner – Sharing Reflections

This space in the newsletter is available for sharing of our stories, insights and experiences. Consider sending a short paragraph of your own for inclusion in next month's edition. Deadline is January 2nd.

Website

Outreach has always been part of the mission of Sophia Christi and our website is an important aspect of that mission. The 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.

The third Sunday of Advent we are told to "Rejoice!" The birth of Jesus/Emmanuel is imminent. We can almost see Mary, so near to term that her flight to Egypt with Joseph must be terribly painful. But there she is walking, riding, obeying Joseph's angelic message, and his own gut-feeling, that the baby will be in danger if they stay where they

are. Theirs is the plight of all refugees fleeing danger to their children and loved ones, whether the threat is posed by governments, individuals or environmental degradation. John the Baptist is strongly featured in the readings of Advent, but Mary should, perhaps, be the central character. John's is the voice crying out in the wilderness, telling us in no uncertain terms that NOW is the time to be alert, pay attention, make a straight path in our hearts and our world for God to be newly born in our lives. But it is Mary who carries that new life in her BODY through nine long months. It is she, in the most vulnerable state imaginable, who ventures into an unknown land nearly nine months pregnant. She is the one who models our role as Christ-bearers, who shows us what it means to be "Temples of the Spirit" and to bring Wholeness, tenderness, and a mother's love into the world. Mothers know what is overlooked in this story—the death-defying vulnerability of motherhood, and the radical love required to shelter and feed the weak and the powerless, to safeguard and nurture the unprotected and defenseless. Mary is the icon of our own identity, for it is through us that God is borne, and through us that God dwells with us. This is the new highway we must make straight in the wilderness, a highway that carries us into each other's arms again, where Hope is alive, and the birth of new life is imminent. In Advent we pray for the dawning of this Light, for the birth of the Christ-child within us, as we wait in anticipation, willing again to be responsible Mothers of God's Presence in the world.

A blessed Advent and Merry Christmas to all of you,

Toni