

January 3, 2021

NOTICE: Interested in communicating with others in Sophia Christi? Join the Members Facebook page. See below for instructions about how to participate.

Happy New Year Sophia Christi,

We celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany today with the story of Wise Ones from the East arriving in Jerusalem asking where they might find “the newborn ruler of the Jews.” Only Matthew’s Gospel records this story. Wise Ones, astrologers, dream interpreters. They saw the world through different eyes. They were “outsiders”, not Romans, not Jews. They followed a star, a ‘cosmic’ sign, not a culturally nuanced calculation. They paid attention to things that lay behind or beyond the ordinary and they remind us today that “strangers” bear gifts well beyond what we might consider important. It is crucial, perhaps, that we hear this message now as we move deeper into the questions and biases of our day. 2021 will, for instance, be marked with a continuation of our struggle against racism and system-wide bigotry. There is no easy resolution of this issue on the horizon but there is growing recognition that fear and hatred of “strangers”—of anyone who is ‘different’ from society’s definition of the ‘norm’—is a 21st century quandary we must deal with if there is to be any semblance of peace within nations and the world. The word ‘epiphany’ means ‘appearance’ and is often used when revealing some new idea or insight that has suddenly dropped into focus, altering a long-held perspective, allowing us to see and be in the world in a new way. The Magi for instance, Gentiles that they were, planted the seed of an inclusive theology in the soil of Jerusalem upon their arrival. Was this Matthew’s intention when he included the story? The landscape did change as a result. Paul preached to Gentiles, argued with Peter, brought non-Jews (and now us, and all Creation) into the matrix of “chosen people”. Perhaps the Epiphany encourages us to entertain a bold, new perspective. In today’s first reading Isaiah cries out: *“Arise, shine, for your light has come, the glory of Our God is rising on [in] you, though night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples. Above you Our God now rises, and God’s glory now shines on you.”* These are heartening words, reassuring us that there is more going on behind the scenes than we can possibly know. We can get glimpses of promising new developments in “history’s arc toward justice’ if we look closely, but it is often difficult to believe that God’s glory is shining on us when the effects of a traumatic year linger in our lives and threaten to continue wreaking havoc in the months ahead. There is, however, new light in old, dark corners of society, as the reality of systemic injustice is made clear and established powers are forced into a period of reckoning. There is light in grass-root organizations sprouting all over the globe dedicated to environmental restoration, cooperation, dialogue, and resolving community issues non-violently. There is challenge everywhere we look, but there are also hopeful signs, including in the heavens, for those willing to see, willing to look for promising signs, to trust that “God is rising in us, though night still covers the earth” and to humbly witness new light dawning in this 21st year of the 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, **January 9**, 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 Masses, you will automatically receive a Zoom invitation this month for our liturgy on the 9th. Invitations will be sent Friday, January 8th. 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, January 6th.

January Social Gathering – Jan. 23rd.

Join us for our first Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together of 2021 on Saturday, January 23rd, from 5:00 to 6:00 pm. These virtual gatherings provide a relaxed and informal opportunity for Sophia Christi community members to enjoy one another's company during this time of social distancing. It's ok if you weren't able to participate last year; all are welcome! Toni will send the Zoom link out the Thursday before the meeting. For more information, contact Josie Miranda, Sophia Christi Communications Team (Josephine.Miranda64@gmail.com). See you on the 23rd!

Christmas Eve Liturgy a Blessing and Delight

We had a wonderful community celebration Christmas Eve that included 39 members from around our region, from Eugene and Portland to Battle Ground in the north, and from Stayton in the east to Corvallis and Salem in the west—a virtual geographical cross. It was delightful to bring the regional community together this year, one of the few blessing-outcomes resulting from this horrific pandemic. Christmas carols framed the liturgy from beginning to end, arranged by Dianne Dugaw for the first Christmas Eve Liturgy celebrated ten years ago—then annually—in Eugene. She and her partner Amanda, and Eugene choir member Sally, spent many hours in December refining the way they would present 'live' music over Zoom—a challenge all churches face in these days of virtual liturgies. They succeeded beautifully!! Thank you to all of our musicians, including Doug Smith and Anna Sasaki in Portland, for the incredible gift of music!

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 gloverconnection@yahoo.com or Pastor Toni.

Council Member Reflection

Another day sitting home and looking out the window. It is probably what many are doing these days. I consider myself lucky because my window looks out on farmland and just in front of the window is a large bird feeder. We keep the feeder full of bird seed and birds visit from first light to dusk. When not eating they sit on the edge of the feeder and look in my window. Do they see me as well as I see them? I've noticed their feathers change colors during the year and now are becoming more colorful. The golden crown sparrow with a yellow stripe on the top of its head spends a lot of time in the feeder. There are many other types of birds, but I don't know their names. Deer and other animals cross the field as well. It makes me hopeful that as much as we humans have messed things up there is still a future for the planet. It has been a tough year for many of us, but we are made of strong stuff and with help from God we will get through.
--Carol Zolkoske, 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 February 5th.

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.

It is a rainy day here in Portland as I write to you. A cleansing rain, washing away the mis-directions of a painful year, drenching the dry ground with living water so seeds can sprout tender new shoots in the spring. What seeds have we planted during the 'dark-time' of the year-just-ending? What have we buried, thinking it gone? What do we hope will sprout new life and resurrect in Easter blessings when the sun begins warming our part of the world? When we gather for Mass next Saturday we will be celebrating Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan. This year, for the first time, I feel especially attuned to the need for a global 'baptism,' an immersion in the cleansing waters of the Earth and Cosmos. We hear Peter again in the house of Cornelius saying: *"In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever lives in wonder and reverence of God and acts uprightly is pleasing to God."* How do we begin making this awareness a living reality in society? The phrase "no partiality" can actually be used to disenfranchise people on the margins, people of color, people who are somehow "different" from the

social 'norm'—if we aren't careful. It can lead to further violence against those asserting their needs, their "rights," if we fail to see they aren't asking for "special treatment," but simply and rightly demanding that obstacles to full inclusion be dismantled and removed. When privileges are revoked, the privileged often feel they are being discriminated against in favor of privileging someone else. A case of sibling rivalry writ large in society? What does it take to right wrongs that are centuries-old? How do we navigate the inequalities and injustices bred into the system, so normalized now that we can't see the ocean of pain it continues replicating generation after generation? The waters of baptism took Jesus into the desert where he met Satan's temptation to power, status, privilege. As we enter this new year, bathed again in the Jordan standing alongside Jesus, let's hear again those words summoning us to stand as "servants" called to bring forth "justice" in our nation. It takes willingness and courage to be bathed in these waters. In this new year, may we summon both.

A blessed Epiphany to all of you,

Toni