

February 7, 2021

**Join the Members Facebook page. See below for instructions about how to participate.**

Winter greetings to all of you,

As I read the words of Job this morning I was struck, yet again, by the timelessness of Scripture. Job could be talking about the pandemic when he says: "I have been assigned months of misery, and troubled nights have been appointed for me."

Psychologists, sociologists and even political scientists are studying the effects of imposed isolation throughout the past year on all of us humans, but what I find most fascinating is humanity's existential crisis—the deeply spiritual crisis—our human family is going through. Whatever was 'normal' in years past, whatever predictability we may have taken for granted, has been wrenched from our homes, our families, our community, our nation certainly, and the world-at-large. We are left in liminal space spiritually while many of the things in the outer world continue a crippled dance, teetering toward a disastrous fall, then somehow seem to awkwardly steady themselves as we hold our collective breath. I've watched my sleep patterns devolve into shreds of interrupted semi-slumber, though the word 'pattern' hardly fits the experience. Where are we today? What are we supposed to be doing? I can barely remember what day it is myself, and my priorities seem centered on what is right in front of me much of the time. My spirit is slowing down to a crawl and my mind is a tumble of snippets. I roam from room to room when no Zoom meeting or phone appointment requires my time and attention, which in itself is all-to-rare. Grocery shopping pulls me out of the house earlier than I would ordinarily choose to go. As a 'senior' the hours of greatest shopping safety begin at 7 or 8am depending on the grocer.

As I detail these possibly common experiences, I recognize all of them rest on the surface of living a life during this life-altering pandemic. The deeper experience is subtle. I'm face-to-face with issues of mortality, with losses I can't even name as yet. I feel that gut-wrenching sense of 'loss' when I stop and take in what happened at the Capital on January 6<sup>th</sup>, when I let in the reality of a ravaged downtown Portland, when I drive down a residential street and see tents and detritus strewn along the parking strip. My heart feels so heavy. My soul feels stripped and shorn of all it thought it new about reality, about 'rightness' and normalcy and, at the same time I realize the increasing human tragedy I witness on these streets has been an everyday reality for so many of my sisters and brothers for decades. The leprosy so evident now in our social 'body' can no longer be hidden behind white-washed walls. It can't be easily denied or ignored. A stalking virus is making this obviously clear.

We are experiencing an existential crisis on a collective scale. It is a communal trauma, a spiritual wake-up call that moves us, irrevocably, into a critical time of decision-making, individually of course, but also as an earth-based family. It is deep soul-work that must be accomplished now. Everything in our experience is pointing toward and naming this time as an historical watershed. Will the Earth survive us—these generations of US here 'on hand' in these early days of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Will the U.S. survive? And how about our parents and grandparents in this Covid era? What of our children and grandchildren isolated in their 'nuclear pods'? And what lives matter? Any of them? Do we collectively CARE? We are figuring out our most critical priorities

as we go along. But it would help, I think, if the spiritual urgings and invitations are named so we don't get lost in the weeds of 'merely fixing' whatever structures seem to be broken. We need to rebuild, not just 'from the ground up' but from the inside (the heart of the matter) outward. And Lent is a perfect time for us to consider what Spirit--in the guise of our experiences this last incredible year--is asking of us. Ash Wednesday arrives in just ten days. The season calls us inward, to the heart of the matter, the Heart of all that is Real. What are we being asked to see, and to change?

**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, **February 13**, at **5:00pm**. Our Masses are online every 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup>. Invitations will be sent Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup>. 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, February 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **Summary of January 16<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting**

*The Sophia Christi Parish Council met on January 16, 2021. A decision was made to have a virtual Easter Vigil Mass, as we did last year. Easter Vigil will be April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Parish finances are sound. In person Masses and Retreats continue to be a goal for the Parish Council, but the chaos and tragedy around Covid-19 just keeps going. The monthly virtual get-togethers are going well and I encourage all of you to consider tuning in. These are held the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month from 5 - 6 pm, via Zoom and they are an enjoyable way to get to know the other Parish members. --Mike Newton, Parish Council President*

### **Join us for our February 27 Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together**

*Our next Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together is Saturday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, from 5:00 to 6:00 pm. This is a relaxed, informal opportunity to see and talk with members from both the Eugene and Portland communities. The conversation is always wide-ranging, but you can also just sit quietly and enjoy everyone's company. It's ok if you haven't attended before--everyone is welcome. Toni will send out the Zoom invitation the Thursday before the gathering. If you have any questions, please contact me ([Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com](mailto:Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com)). We hope to see you on the 27<sup>th</sup>! --Josie Miranda, Sophia Christi Communications Team*

### **Lent Begins February 17<sup>th</sup> – Retreat Suspended Another Year**

For the second year in a row the Sophia Christi Lenten Retreat will be suspended due to the pandemic. The Council is considering the option of scheduling a retreat later in the year if it becomes safe for everyone to gather.

### **Sophia Christi Facebook Page and "Group" Page for SC Members**

*Watch for Lenten Offerings on our Facebook Page!*

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](mailto:gloverconnection@yahoo.com) or Pastor Toni.

## Council Member Reflection

*It's been almost a year since our Masses went online and gathering with community became virtual. What a strange year! I spent a few months on my own at the end of last year and through January while my husband, Winston, was caring for his folks during a health crisis. This experience made me especially mindful of others and their loneliness during this ongoing time of sheltering-in-place. It was a good fallow time for me to hibernate, in a sense, and gather energies for moving more fully into the New Year and to what it will demand of me as we await a vaccine and transition back to a life that involves contact with other people. School has, as well, begun for me again and I have been cheered by my students' enthusiasm for learning. This semester I am beginning my ecospirituality classes with a short ritual of dedication when students and I can dedicate our learning together to a beloved being, and this has helped us ground what we are doing together in a larger purpose. I look forward to seeing if it's something I may continue in future semesters. In connecting this practice of a virtual learning community to my own solitude these past few months, I think: how can I dedicate this time of having been lonely to a larger community and its needs? How can I attend better to the voices of the lonely and allow them to coax me out of my comfort zone to providing the company we all need, in varying doses? I'm listening to Spirit and hopeful to put this experience, though undesired at the time, to a purpose designed by Spirit. –Rachel Wheeler, Council Member*

## Member's Corner – Sharing Reflections

This space in the newsletter is available for sharing our stories, insights and experiences. Consider sending a short paragraph of your own for inclusion in next month's edition. Deadline is Mar. 5<sup>th</sup> This month's reflection comes from Josie Miranda:

*Thoughts on Lent and the Gift of God's Grace--"Rend your hearts, not your garments." Joel 2:13*

*You may be familiar with a geologic form called a geode. Geodes are hollow rocks internally lined with beautiful crystal and mineral formations that mesmerize with their stunning display of color and pattern. Each geode is unique, and its hidden treasures can only be appreciated by breaking the hard rock in half. This year, particularly after the challenges of 2020, Lent provides me an opportunity to crack open the geode that is my heart and rediscover the gift of God's Grace. However, with that invitation comes a call to search for and abate the flaws and imperfections that prevent me from sharing that Grace with others. This Lenten season, instead of giving something up, I wish to give something away; so during this solemn time of reflection, my focus will be on rediscovering and rekindling those spiritual practices that fill me with an abundance of compassion, understanding, patience and love, Christ-centered qualities still*

*desperately needed during this ongoing time of spiritual challenge. My hope is that by breaking open and polishing this sacred geode heart of mine and then sharing its precious contents with you we are each blessed and made ready for the promise of Easter. May God's Grace radiate from your heart and Spirit guide your Lenten journey this season. --Josie Miranda*

## **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](http://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.

We enter a season of Spiritual re-discovery as we approach Lent. Spirit seems to be calling us to reflect, deeply, on what we are being led to see, what needs to be opened to question. We are shown a vast assortment of personal and collective challenges. They sit alongside a large studio mirror. What is lying untended in us is visible in that mirror, but only for our own eyes to see, to admit, to find the courage to address. The anger, fear and desperation out there in the street-of-challenges is hiding somewhere in our own hearts, leading us to think and act in ways we need to understand and face if healing is to happen in us and in our world. This is spiritual work of the deepest kind. Spirit brings forward the long-buried debris from generations past and holds it steady before our soul's vision. A time of purification is upon us, insists we confront our many fears as well as our 'natural' resistance to change. We who claim Jesus as our brother remember how he faced his own fears for 40 days in a desert long ago. We've been given a small taste of that desert experience this year. What does Lent invite us to do with all the unusual experiences we've had personally these many months? What about those we've shared standing beside family and friends, or next to siblings in a nation at odds with itself, or on a planet in crisis in a world full of humans mixed up in conflicts barely understood, let alone accurately evaluated or named?

This is a Lenten journey for the brave-of-heart, facing into the cauldron of history and of soul. Ideas for reflection abound. Guidance comes in many forms: reading and reflecting on a Scripture passage each day is one; volunteering time in a community or church outreach effort another; spending a specific amount of time each day in contemplative prayer; taking a daily "walk with God" through the neighborhood, asking Christ-Sophia what it is S/he sees...then being quiet, listening...in case s/he has something to tell you. There are so many ways to enter the journey. Your soul, your imagination, Christ, Sophia can take the lead. If you do reflect, consider sharing. Spirit comes through many voices to benefit us all.

May Sophia hold you close this Lent,

Toni.