

March 28, 2021

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

Dear Community,

The fragrance of daphne sweeps in through the doorway when I retrieve the morning paper, almost as a promise of good things to come. Daffodils grace yards and neighborhood parks with bright flashes of yellow and gold, and tiny buds have formed on the maple and ginkgo trees lining the street. I don't know the name of the little bird singing so enthusiastically outside my window, but her song is always, for me, one of the first sounds of spring. I have nearly forgotten the icy power outages of last month and it seems months ago that I shoveled the sidewalk and crunched my way to the car. Life reminds me again that one of its prime teaching methods is that of 'contrast.' Where winter is a harsh reminder of suffering and mortality, spring is often windy, wet and nourishing, encouraging life to emerge from barren soil and gnarled limbs. This pattern was turned on its head last March, interrupting the anticipated renewal we naturally expect with the coming of spring. Those early signs of a pandemic year disoriented the world, caught us off-guard and thwarted hopes and dreams as we stood on the cusp of a brand-new decade. We have emerged disheveled, battered by caustic political winds and reaching for something solid, something to depend on, trying to regain our footing. And as we stand here today, one year later, we see in nature those early signs of renewal and perhaps feel the warming rays of hope. Blessed Nature, humanity's first Scripture comes again to the rescue as it has throughout time. Light returns. Sprouts break through the frozen ground. As long as our species has walked the surface of this amazing planet, the re-emergence of life from the cold, dark deadness of winter has re-kindled faith. We are firmly planted in the resurrection story, watching life emerge from death every year as winter turns to spring. Anchored in the soil of this lovely home, experiencing the cycle of its seasons for millennia, the human spirit knows and trusts this story even when our minds rebel, doubt and dismiss the evidence. In the story of Jesus religion finds language, cultivates vision, evokes memory, and re-tells the experience of our ancestors. Jesus reminds us we are woven into the fabric of Life Itself. Life, God, is the constant. Death is a transition from one form, one phase of existence, to another. This is the radical truth of our being. Jesus' life, death and resurrection teaches in human form what Nature has taught throughout Earth's history. Faith accepts the evidence and anchors us in the web of creation, embracing death as a transitional rung on the developmental ladder of existence, encouraging us to embrace one another and all life forms as integral parts of the vast and all-encompassing Body of Christ. As Christians we journey through Holy Week with eyes open, hearts tender and receptive, ears attuned to the whispers of Holy Wisdom. We walk in the footsteps of our eldest brother, learning the migratory path that will always lead us home.

Readings for Liturgies can be found on the USCCB website at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/>.

PLEASE NOTE: Change in April Online Mass Schedule

We will NOT meet the second Saturday in April. We will, instead, gather for our **Easter Vigil Mass via Zoom** on Saturday, **April 3**, at **7:00pm**. We will resume our usual second Saturday-of-the-month schedule in May.

Easter Vigil Information: April 3rd at 7:00 pm

For our celebration of Easter Vigil, set your table with: an unlit candle, a match or lighter, a bowl of water, bread, wine or grape juice. Christ invites each one of us into communion as members of the One Body, the Body of Christ.

For the first seven or eight centuries Christians who gathered together for Eucharist were fully conscious that the risen Jesus was in their midst. Bread, wine and the assembled community embodied that consciousness. Jesus was truly present, as he said he would be when they gathered in his name, feeding them with his Spirit in and through each other and in the elements of bread and wine on their table. As we have assembled virtually this past year we have experienced a subtle alteration in our own experience of “presence” perhaps without realizing. While missing the physical proximity of loved ones and of our community, technology has allowed us to see, even “touch” one another when not physically present in the same room. Our bodies have learned that the ‘body’ of another need not be present for their actual “presence” to be real.

We come together as the Body of Christ each month from all parts of our region in a format that was alien even to us twenty or thirty years ago. We celebrate Eucharist with the sure knowledge that Christ is in our midst, and the elements on each of our tables are linked through the mystery of “real” presence. At the dawn of the fifth century St. Augustine said: “If you are members of the Body of Christ then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. When you hear the words “the Body of Christ” and say “Amen” then be a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true.”

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 3rd. Invitations will be sent Friday, April 2nd. 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, March 31st.

Summary of March 20th Council Meeting

The Pastoral Council met on March 20, 2021 via Zoom. We discussed ways to publicize the Easter Vigil Mass on April 3. We also considered the question of when we might resume in-person Masses. Most agreed that use of Zoom during this past year has facilitated the getting together of the whole Sophia Christi community in an appealing way that we don't quite know how to continue once we are able to resume in-person Masses. There are other advantages to using Zoom in terms of addressing transportation issues and including community members outside Portland and Eugene. An idea about alternating Zoom Masses and in-person Masses in the future was proposed and discussed. We also shared information about how we are seeing other churches navigate the pandemic. We acknowledged that the situation in Oregon is still in flux and this question about resuming in-person Masses will have to be revisited at the next

meeting (in June), with no firm plan for the future being adopted now--other than to be patient and see how things go. We also expressed regret that we are missing some folks not able to attend Masses through Zoom this past year and brainstormed ideas for including them if we're able to address equipment needs or difficulty using or accessing technology. It was a good meeting and discussion seemed to take the pulse of our community's situation at this point in the year and to prepare for steps moving forward as our situation in Oregon permits. --Rachel Wheeler, Council Secretary

Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together March 27

Sophia Christi's Zoom Get Together was Saturday, March 27, from 5:00 to 6:00pm. These informal virtual gatherings have provided members from both the Eugene and Portland communities with a wonderful opportunity to connect with one another during this time of physical separation. All are welcome! Toni sends out the Zoom invitation a couple days before the meeting. Contact Josie with any questions at Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com. --Josie Miranda, Sophia Christi Communications Team

Staying Connected – Zoom Gatherings and Facebook Options

I joined the Sophia Christi Council this year and appreciate that during these times it is a way that I am able to stay connected to and serve our community. I also am grateful that the Holy Spirit has inspired our community to find avenues of opportunity for us to gather together until we are safely post pandemic. Zoom is available for Mass celebrations and our monthly social gatherings, and now we have our Facebook page which also provides us a venue for posting items about online courses or other offerings for adding richness to our spiritual lives. There is also a room set up on the Facebook page that some of us are using for a Lenten bible study discussion based on a series that is being offered through the Future Church organization. You are invited to join us Wednesdays at 5:30 PM. A Facebook room option on the Sophia Christi page is also available should any community member desire to facilitate a meet-up group for other faith-related topics. If you would like more information, contact me lankutisa@gmail.com, or Rachel Wheeler rastonwinchel@hotmail.com. May this Lenten season be especially deep and rich for you all! --Anna Lankutis, Council Member

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@yahoos.com or Pastor Toni.

Council Member Reflection

This week I received my first Covid 19 vaccination. I was surprised how easy the process was from beginning to end. After the shot I had to wait 30 minutes and I began to think. How good it is to have a vaccine; a hundred years ago they did not have one. Where would we be without it? I began to think about the scientists and engineers that made the vaccine possible. How thankful I am for them and how very much we owe them. In a similar way, I am thankful for Toni's ministry. For me, with the churches closed, this pandemic has become a spiritual desert. And often I don't even realize it until I receive the Newsletter or tune into Mass and then I realize what it is to be spiritually filled and to hear the good news of God's love. Just two of the many things I am thankful for. --Mike Newton, Council President

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 March 28 for the April newsletter.

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.

Today is Passion/Palm Sunday. It marks Jesus' final return to Jerusalem where he is hailed as rescuer and healer by a triumphant crowd that has no idea who he really is, a crowd that turns on him instantaneously when fearful and malicious 'group think' transforms them into a murderous mob. As we've learned, it is all-too easy to plant seeds of hatred in the fertile soil of collective fear. When Jesus walked into Jerusalem he knew the authorities were waiting, and he knew the threat he posed to their well-defended systems of power and influence. In a posting today by The Rev. Dr. Caleb Lines, Co-Executive Director of Progressive Christianity.org he writes: "Palm Sunday is the day when Jesus staged a planned protest against the principalities and the powers and asked his followers to choose between the path of the world that perpetuates the status quo or the way of Christ that embodies the Reign of God." At the entrance to Holy Week we are given a choice—do we follow the crowd as it cries for a worldly hero, or do we follow Jesus who dashes those hopes on the rough-hewn wood of a cross? If we walk with Jesus we face into the toxic winds of oppression in all its forms. Rev. Lines reminds us that the road to Jerusalem is littered with "the crosses of poverty, racism, inequality, violence, environmental injustice, oppression of the LGBTQ+ community, a world that values money over all, and a country that has refused to fully welcome the stranger." As we enter the Holiest week of the liturgical year we are asked to become even more aware of those crosses. The story of Jesus' Passion feels closer to many of us now having suffered the betrayal of officials, the structural injustice in our systems and the brokenness of our society. We were taught to see Jesus as separate from us, to see his life as different from ours and utterly unique. But his life journey has been

replicated countless times in the lives of the poor and marginalized. Holy Week brings this reality into focus, gives us a lens through which to see what the Body of Christ faces today. We cannot reach Easter without passing through the cross, but Christ awaits us at that terrifying portal, blesses our courage, and transforms the darkness into the new life of dawn.

May the journey of Holy Week usher you into Easter Joy,

Toni