

June 6, 2021

Dear Community,

St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in the late 4th/early 5th Century, used this phrase in his teaching about the Eucharist: “Behold what you are; become what you receive.” He took seriously Paul’s words to the Corinthians: “You are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Cor 12:27) We may not think about the theology of the Eucharist very often, if ever, but the Feast of Corpus Christi—the “Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ” celebrated today in our churches—brings the issue front and center. Even though the Second Vatican Council brought a “corporate” understanding into an overly personalized view of the Eucharist, we still haven’t moved very far from the isolated “me-and-Jesus” moment of pre-Vatican II theology when receiving the “Body of Christ” in Communion. That sort of piety is still being fostered as a traditionalist backlash to liturgical documents of Vatican II where the corporate nature of the “People of God” was prominent. It has been difficult for highly individualistic cultures such as ours to fully grasp our oneness as a people. As a society we seem to resist the concept when not completely rejecting it. But the Hebrew Scriptures on which our own New Testament rests, as well as Jesus and his disciples, understood sin, salvation and redemption inclusively rather than individually. God’s Spirit, infusing all matter, all creatures, all of humanity, is indivisible and we, though many, are one. “Behold what you are, the Body of Christ.” St. Augustine taught his community this truth centuries ago, and it is a message Christians have yet to take seriously. It requires a radical shift in how we experience ourselves in relation to others and all life on the planet. We are called to treat everything and everyone as sacred. Exploitation can no longer be tolerated if we fully embrace our identity. Human beings can no longer be thought of as “consumers” within an industrialized market economy if all life is sacred. Some Christians are engaged in making this conscious shift even now, but the corporate “Body of Christ” remains largely unrecognized. Individual piety continues to be fostered in churches leaving individualistic theological structures intact. Yet the Eucharist continues to call us to a corporate identity, to recognize that we are each one tiny cell in the larger unified body. Not only are we interdependent but we are held as one by the substance of Love that is God’s life flowing through us all. Saying “amen” to all of that is the deeper truth the Eucharist bids us to recognize and live into as we speak with each other and live our lives as part of this one giant nervous system that is physical reality. By saying “Amen” to the Body of Christ in communion we say “yes” to this deepest truth of existence—we are part of each other. Denial of this truth is the mechanism that allows all forms of domination, exploitation and abuses of power to continue. Christ calls the lie to these structured systems of denial. As Christians living within these falsifying systems we are challenged to recognize our complicity, and to continually re-align our words and actions with what we know to be true—the Body of Christ is all inclusive. It is who and what we are.

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, **June 12**, at **5:00pm**. Our Masses are online every 2nd Saturday-of-the-month until everyone can gather safely in person.

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. Invitations will be sent Friday, June 11. 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, June 9th.

Join Us for Our June 26th Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together

Happy May, everyone! Our 11th Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together for 2021 is Saturday, June 26th, from 5:00 to 6:00 pm. These relaxed and informal virtual gatherings have helped to foster a strong sense of community between the Eugene and Portland groups. All are welcomed and encouraged to attend. Toni will send out the Zoom invitation a couple of days before the gathering. For more information contact Josie with any questions at Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com. --Josie Miranda, Sophia Christi Communications Team

Staying Connected – Zoom Gatherings and Facebook Options

In addition to our monthly Masses and social gatherings over Zoom, we also have the Sophia Christi Facebook page. You can join the page and check for postings about online courses or other offerings. FB also provides the option of hosting a private group discussion in one of its meet-up rooms. If anyone would like more information about this resource, or if you are interested in facilitating a discussion with other Sophia Christi members please contact lankutisa@gmail.com, or Rachel Wheeler rastonwinchel@hotmail.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 contact Kathleen Glover gloverconnection@yahoo.com or Pastor Toni.

Council Member Reflection

I'd like to share with you an experience I recently had with prejudice, and the blessed gift I received as a result. One morning on my way to work a few weeks ago I decided to stop at a drive thru to get a cup of coffee. Already running late and so feeling frazzled and impatient, I joined the line of cars behind a nearly brand-new, green Cadillac driven by a woman with perfectly coiffed platinum blonde hair. When she reached the window, I noticed that she seemed to take her time paying, first using a card, then, for some reason, cash. My irritation finally boiled over, and my mind went there, straight to an ugly stereotype: "Rich people! Think they're the center of the universe and the rest of us have to wait on them!" Without thinking I had expressed the very thing that I, as a Puerto Rican, lesbian, Christian, supposedly hated: bigotry.

I pulled up to the window to pay for my coffee, but before I could hand the cashier my money she said, "The lady in front of you paid for your order." I was stunned. Only a few moments earlier I had sat in my car making ugly assumptions and

passing judgement on a person whom I knew nothing about—the very definition of “prejudice”—while she, filled with grace, engaged in an act of unsolicited generosity towards a person whom she knew nothing about, me. I had stripped her of her holiness, and I felt ashamed. By the time I’d rounded the corner she’d already gone and so I was unable to thank her for her kindness. But in that moment, I realized that the real gift came from Spirit: the opportunity to face and address my own internal bias. I grabbed my cup of coffee and drove away, chastened and humbled, yet immensely grateful for the blessed reminder to never lose sight of the sacred in every human being.
—Josie Miranda, Sophia Christi Councilmember

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 June 4th for the June 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.

We enter a new season of discipleship training next weekend as we move into Ordinary Time. Each week the Gospel takes us on a walk with Jesus as he moves from village to village. We hear his parables and learn what being his disciple is asking of us who wish to follow him home. He eats with everyone, those who taunt, those who judge as well as those who listen attentively to his words. He feeds thousands because every single person in the crowd is not only hungry but worthy of receiving whatever he has to give. As a study in contrast, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops will begin this year’s season of discipleship by bringing to a vote the brazen proposal initiated by ultra-conservative men in their ranks who wish to deny the Eucharist to politicians who support pro-choice policies. Obviously targeting Joe Biden, our second Catholic president, this scandalous political ploy is doctrinally so unconscionable that the CDC (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) issued a warning to the American bishops. Calling the proposal “misleading,” Cardinal Ladaria, Prefect of the CDC, issued a letter to the president of the Conference, Archbishop Gomez of Los Angeles, cautioning them about issuing a national policy when they meet virtually June 16-18. Keeping in mind the fundamental teaching of Paul that we are, all of us, the Body of Christ in the world, withholding Communion (food) from anyone is a serious matter. And when the decision is politically motivated based on a culture-war mentality it is even more serious in its cancerous effect on the Body of Christ. Jesus’ disciples know that radical love, mercy and acceptance of others is his way. If we are not being that Body, using our minds and

hands to serve the needs of that Body, then we have not yet become what we have received at Christ's table. But the Eucharist continues to beckon us forward, to draw us deeper into our truth as individuals and as God's people. It rejects no one. At its core is the heart of Jesus, a heart that loves unconditionally and never judges. The Eucharist doesn't judge us, and the bishops are out of sync with their own claimed theology when they move into the judgment seat while standing at Christ's table. We are workers in the field, people who have said and meant "yes" in uttering "Amen" to becoming the Body of Christ we behold in the sacrament. In its way the sacrament is an icon through which we view the truth of who we are and merge with that truth. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis wrote "there are doors that shouldn't be closed, and the doors of the sacraments shouldn't be closed for any reason... The Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak." [47] Weakness is part of human nature. Jesus knew and respected this. "Judge not," he told us. May our bishops take heed. In their upcoming meeting just 10 days from now let's pray the U.S. bishops refrain from such a misguided step as to vulgarize the Eucharist by making it a prize for compliance with their politics.

Blessings and peace,

Toni