

August 8, 2021

Happy Anniversary Sophia Christi,

We celebrate 14 years as a community this month. The time has passed so quickly! Last August came and went with barely a whisper of recognition that we were crossing the threshold of another year. But as we embark on number 15 I find myself thinking a great deal about the historical moment we live in and what it means for a community such as ours to be present and active during this time. I ponder Paul's words to us, those we will hear next week: "Make the most of your time, for these are evil days." And I see that we have been doing just that, making the most of our time despite the imposed distancing required in this pandemic. Covid-19 brought Sophia Christi members from all six counties together in one place for the first time (notwithstanding the annual retreat and summer potlucks). For the first time Eugene and Portland celebrated Mass together every month, got to know each other across this widespread region, saw each other's faces, sang with each other's musicians. Unable to meet in person, we explored new ways to connect the whole body of 'us' through a technological gift that had only recently become an option. It's a bit of a stretch for me to even remember a time before Zoom now! You?? We seem to have leap-frogged into a new dimension of reality. Sometimes what we have gained seems so lackluster when what we've lost is so painful. But in recounting some of our blessings we may see a glimmer of Spirit hidden within these dark and confusing times. I'm convinced that Sophia/Wisdom continues to guide and support us in this journey because I've seen the many ways we've come together through the years, the creativity that has fostered new connections this year, while also sustaining our life as a community these past 18 months. "Wisdom has built Herself a house," we hear in our first reading from Proverbs next week, and Sophia Christi is evidence that Her house continues to stand firm, securely anchored in the very heart of these "evil days." We are privileged to live in the house She's built here. It is solid and boundless. Her table is massive, and we gather around it every month to hear Her words as they echo through Scripture, reach out through Paul's letters and the words of the prophets, as well as through the teachings of Jesus and the example of his life. Wisdom has set Her table with the food She's prepared and the wine She's poured for us. We are fed at this table. Here we remind ourselves again that the ground we walk upon is sacred, that God is with us, that all of 'this', as confusing and stressful as it is, has meaning. We follow Paul's advice, opening our hearts and minds again and again to be filled by the Spirit. We listen. We rest and recover a sense of purpose as we ponder those ancient words and apply them to the context and challenges of our own time. We are Wisdom's children, called to live our lives wisely, thoughtfully, truthfully, compassionately. She invites us into the vortex of Mystery without concern for our resistance, disbelief, bargaining, or despair. In this critical time, when most of us are grasping for an end to the new 'abnormal', Sophia reminds us we are safely held in the house She built long ago. And so, Paul says, meditate on these spiritual gifts and "give thanks to God always and in everything."

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, **August 14**, at **5:00pm**. Our Masses are online every 2nd Saturday-of-the-month until everyone can gather safely in person.

Upcoming Events:

Zoom Invitations for August Liturgy

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 14th. Invitations will be sent Friday, August 13. 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, August 11th.

Join Us for Our Saturday, August 28th Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together

Our next **Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together** for 2021 is **Saturday, August 28th, 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

Pastoral Update:

Toni's Vacation--Reminder

Toni will be on vacation from September 19 through the month of October. There will be no newsletter or Mass in October. The newsletter will return November 7th with Mass the following Saturday, November 13.

Zoom Liturgy Recordings

One advantage of Online Liturgies is that we have the option of recording them. If you are interested in receiving the recording this month please let Toni know. The recording is available within a day or two following Mass. Send her an email if you are interested.

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 and other offerings, as well as post information you would like to share. 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.

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.

First century people, as well as their ancestors, understood evil to be the result of human refusal to obey God's will since evil was seen as the consequence of a people's rebellion against God and God's commands. Jesus summarized God's will for humanity in Mt. 22:37-40: "You shall love God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The source of the entire Hebrew Bible (the Law and the Prophets) rests in these two commandments. A fool in Biblical terms is one who lives life as if God and God's will have no meaning, as if the law of love is irrelevant. Paul advises us not to "act like fools, but like wise and thoughtful people." Our task is to "try to discern the will of God" in all circumstances, including those that envelop us here in the 21st century. The dark teacher of this age, whether going by the name 'climate change', 'covid-19' or some other, demands our attention, warning us to change our ways. It tests and challenges our grasp of reality, stimulates anxiety, and causes many of us to question the existence and presence of God, the meaning of life, the triumph of good over evil. The circumstances are different but at the end of the second World War people were traumatized by the brutal events of their time. The realities of war with over 50 million dead, cities and nations destroyed, and the eerie cold-blooded attempt by a western regime to exterminate an entire people, brought bishops around the world into alignment with Pius XII's promulgation of a new church dogma, the Assumption of Mary into heaven. It was 1950. Underscoring the preciousness of the physical body, when so many bodies had been monstrously violated, brutalized and callously destroyed, was a revolutionary act for that time. And it raised to consciousness the quasi-Divine maternal image when the world desperately needed a Mother's tender care. Mary's Magnificat, brimming with God's mercy and favor toward the poor, exalting God's presence in the 'lowly' and the handmaids of the world, focuses our attention on the maternal face of the Divine. Sophia does the same from the realm of antiquity. It is the heart of mercy and compassion that invites the 'naïve' and those who 'lack understanding' to the banquet table. It is a Mother's will that all her children love and respect one another, that the rebellious and clueless siblings find their way home so all can share the meal She's prepared and find their seat at the table She's set. There is much yet to be done, within ourselves and within the world, before we can suspend our rivalries and rein in our raucous egos. But I invite you to pause with me at this 14 year mark and give thanks for what we've learned, for what we've lost and gained, and for the companionship this community has provided online, in-person, and through this monthly newsletter. Let's continue to make the most of our time like wise and thoughtful people who know the Divine is alive and active within and among us always. And let's sit together around this wide regional table, praying, giving thanks for the gift of community, for these precious 14 years, and for the presence of Sophia-Christ, within and among us all.

Anniversary blessings to all of you,

Toni

