

September 5, 2021

Labor Day Greetings,

I'm sitting in the garden this late-summer afternoon. It's Labor Day weekend as I begin writing for the fall newsletter. I wonder where all of you are this holiday that traditionally marks our advance into autumn. Where are you within the "Delta" cloud of this ongoing pandemic? How are you managing in this unpredictable, dramatically accelerating time of change we are both part of and passing through? It's the beginning of another school year, one requiring more preparation, more awareness of competing factors, more strategic decision-making to hold the tensions within communities. Challenges are coming at us from all directions and often all-at-once. We are in a space both OF our making and NOT OF our making. It is the liminal space between 'what once was' and 'what is yet to be.' And the unacknowledged "liminality" of these times is driving some of us nuts. The most fearful reach for control in sometimes violent ways. Attempts to "prevent change" are occurring in far too many arenas, including the institutions of religion, even while change on a global scale is rushing forward at a pace that bewilders most of us. Fear clouds awareness of Spirit at work in this historical moment we are all part of. We aren't mere bystanders in the dramatic shift taking place on our watch. We are actors playing important roles even when we have no idea what role we are playing. What is happening is so much bigger than us and well beyond our understanding. We can throw wrenches in the works, of course, through our personal and collective attitudes and behaviors, but we are not empowered to STOP the workings of the Spirit of the Universe, by whatever name the 'Guiding Spirit of Life in all its manifestations' might be called. Our cooperation is being evoked in this process of Birthing God's kin(g)dom. But I don't think we're at all clear about what we are being called to do. We know how to 'act' but aren't good at 'listening' as individuals or as a culture. So, if we make decisions in this liminal space (betwixt and between the pre-pandemic operations and understandings, and the post-pandemic times we can't yet see) those decisions will be based on old rationales that can't prepare us for what Spirit is leading us toward. We need to listen now, and the timing is perfect for a period of intentional reflection.

Tomorrow evening we enter a new year according to the Jewish Calendar. Rosh Hashanah begins Monday at sunset and ends with sunset on Wednesday. It's the beginning of the High Holy Days, the "Days of Awe," that conclude on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. "L'shana tovah," the greeting passed between family members and friends throughout this 10-day period literally means "good year"—happy New Year—have a good year. As we celebrate our national Labor Day holiday tomorrow—we are reminded by our Jewish friends celebrating Rosh Hashanah, and our ancient ancestors, to take heed of where we are, reflect on where we've been and what we've done and not done this past year. What has last year brought to awareness? What actions, in retrospect, were mistakes? How did we navigate the often-confusing challenges? How is our heart burdened? How cluttered is our mind? How full or depleted the spirit...the soul...of ourselves, our families, our communities? It's time to ask important questions; time to listen. The answers to deep questions require depth-of-listening if we are to hear Wisdom speaking. It can be hard to do in such a noisy world. Distractions are endless. Setting aside time to listen within a community, as many Jewish friends are doing, helps create a protected container for stepping into those depths.

The High Holy Days initiate movement into prayerfully reflective spaces. Readings and rituals open the heart, feed the soul of the community with food, friends, family. Attention is directed to the Divine Heart of the Universe Who says “I love you all. You are my people, and I am your God. Recall your experiences of this past year and let go the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that divide, that give hurt, that judge others, that hold you back from being that spark of the infinite, in the world, that you actually are and are meant to be. Take out the trash. Compost the garbage. I, your God, remove all chains you loosen and vaporize all shackles you undo and drop to the ground. I will that you be free of all that ties you to a stifling past.”

Labor Day. A new “school year” begins. Let’s open our ears to “hear as disciples (students) do” and awaken to a new day with Sophia as our guide.

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, **September 11**, 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 11th. Invitations will be sent Friday, September 12. 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, September 8.

Join Us for Our Saturday, September 25th Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together

Join us for our next Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together on Saturday, September 25th from 5:00 to 6:00 pm. It's ok if you've never attended one before. All are welcome! The gatherings are small, relaxed and informal; you can either share your thoughts with folks or listen quietly and just enjoy spending an hour on a Saturday afternoon with your Sophia Christi family. Toni will send the Zoom link out the Friday before. If you have questions please contact Josie at Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com. Hope to see you on the 25th!--Josie Miranda, Sophia Christi Communications Team.

Next Council Meeting – Saturday, September 18

Our next Council meeting will take place from 11am to 1pm on September 18. If you have questions or ideas to offer, please send your thoughts to one of the Council members or email them to Toni prior to the meeting. Portland Council members: Kathleen Glover, Mike Newton, and Rachel Wheeler. Eugene Council members: Jessica Katon, Josie Miranda, Anna Lukatis and Carol Zolkoske.

Pastoral Update:

Toni's Vacation--Reminder

After fourteen years serving our community, Toni is taking a vacation break 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. The

Council proposed and voted for the vacation at the November annual meeting in 2019. You know what happened as 2020 arrived and life-as-usual soon took a dramatic turn. So, long overdue, enjoy some down time, Toni. Blessings on the month ahead.

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 Anna Lankutis 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

As school begins again, I'm struck by the enthusiasm of my students at the University of Portland. They truly seem to be happy to be learning together again in person. I, too, have felt happiness at being in a classroom again, with open windows and free-ranging discussions of faith, God, and spiritual life. Some days students and I have gone outdoors to sit in the sun and talk about giving our lives and our communities--ecological and social--the attention they deserve, and to actually practice doing it. These classes are such good reminders to me of my capacity for enjoyment and gratitude. An appreciative card from a former student arriving on the first day of the semester, lunch with a friend and colleague whom I haven't seen in months, inspirational content in the professional development leadership program I'm enrolled in this year--these little surprises of enjoyment remind me too of the God who loves me. Wishing all of us such reminders of our being beloved! - Rachel Wheeler, Council Secretary

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.

God's students listen to the Holy Voice of Silence as, according to John of the Cross, "Silence is God's first language." The invitation to listen deeply and watch for signs, for clues of Sophia's markings on the path toward a new tomorrow is strong and insistent in this intensified time of unraveling that the pandemic illuminates. We live in a liminal reality that is uncomfortable, frightening and, for some, paralyzing as old forms that have governed this world for centuries are crumbling, and the connective tissues are deteriorating before our eyes. The pandemic has hastened the dismantling of structures many believed were set in stone. It's disorienting to watch them fall, but it's also impossible to visualize systems and practices that will fit what we seek when we don't yet have an image, or clear idea to name. A new way of being humans and earth-beings together is waiting to be born. All we can do is listen carefully, and take care of ourselves and each other, as we walk unsteadily in the direction we are being led by a loving Spirit that nurtures and guides us through the darkness.

As Labor Day and Rosh Hashanah arrive tomorrow, I feel the beginning of another year approaching. All of us who oriented to the "school year" throughout our entire childhood and most of our adolescence have an embedded sense of "graduating" into a new phase of life after Labor Day. Then there were new teachers, new classrooms and often new schools to challenge how we had formerly understood the world and ourselves. A new year began for us in September, and, in many ways, it was much more significant as a milestone in our lives than was January 1st. It isn't a stretch, then, to feel somehow connected to the Jewish calendar. So the invitation to reflect on this past year presents itself again this holiday. May you find time to listen and allow God to open your ears this week and in the days ahead.

I will be taking some time away to listen and reflect over the next month as I take up the offer of a vacation created by the Council in November of 2019. October will be the first month without a newsletter, and the first month without a Mass together in over 14 years. I look forward to being back with you in November and hope you will also take this precious time to reflect, to listen and to allow your ears to be opened to the voice of Spirit. We will be in a new place when we come together again. I have faith Sophia will lead the way.

Labor Day blessings and a 'good year' to all of you. L'shana tovah!

Toni

