

January 2, 2022

A new year is born—She says “hello”--

I’m sitting in the living room before the fire as lights on both tree and mantle remind me the Christmas season continues. Today in many churches the Feast of the Epiphany is being celebrated even though Epiphany completes the “12 days of Christmas” on January 6. The story of the three wise ones (aka: astrologers, kings, magi) is important for us this New Year’s Day weekend as we extend our thoughts to the global community. The Magi were Gentiles, not Jews, yet they were summoned to Bethlehem as readily as were the Jewish shepherds who tended their flocks in the surrounding hills. The shepherds heard an angel’s voice; the magi followed an angelic star. How we see and respond to Mystery differs, but whether our eyes notice a star in the heavens or hear a non-physical voice it is our openness and responsiveness to the Divine summons that matters. The ‘human condition’ means we are each a tangled web of skills, wounds, scars and gifts that shape our perspective. We see and hear Spirit’s sudden appearance in extraordinarily diverse ways.

We cross a threshold as we end one year and begin another. Our backdrop today is the Epiphany—an event in Matthew’s Gospel. But ‘epiphany’ is also a feeling, an experience that offers a startling realization or insight into an issue or situation. We suddenly see and understand things from a deeper and fresher perspective. Covid was and is one such “angel” or “star” beckoning us to take seriously the fact we are inextricably connected to each other and all life on this planet. We are summoned to kneel before what is truly precious—each other, the planet, tenderness, love, vulnerability, truth itself, goodness in all its forms—all that makes us whole and connected regardless of our differences, while also appreciating how the differences themselves add value to our personal and collective lives. The shepherds brought their awe, their responsiveness to Spirit, their openness, poverty and devotion. The Magi brought expensive gifts, but far more important was their ability to listen to their dreams, to observe signs and follow an inner authority rather than comply with the instructions of a deceiving king.

We had many epiphanies in 2020 and 2021, many of them coming as voices from ‘dark’ angels and appearing as ‘dark’ stars in the heavens. The storming of the Capital and attempted coup on the Feast of the Epiphany last year, January 6, 2021, suddenly revealed how lies and deceptive maneuverings had shredded the fabric of democracy in a land considered to be its anchor. As churches celebrate Epiphany-the-feast today, my heart returns to the date of Epiphany last year. What was revealed? What do we now see that was clouded and obscure before? Not just the torn shreds of our dreams and sense of security, but the gem hidden in the crib of our new understanding. Epiphanies reveal sacred truths we were previously unable to see—democracy’s fragility, the divine hope lying in the watering trough of our everyday labors and distorted perceptions. The Divine infant is there...is here. Remarkably, the gestalt of our ‘normal’ perceptions can shift and suddenly we witness the Holy peering at us from the stable of ordinary reality. God is here, always right here, using the dregs of our terrorizing fears and animosities to weave a fresh story, braiding together our questions, needs and dreams into the fabric of a new dawn. The Light of the World returns. Again and again as we shift our focus following the voice of an angel or a star in the East. We are forever being called to the crib, encouraged to open our hearts so we can actually see this time that God is here, in the poorest places, ready to reveal Herself yet again.

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, **January 8**, at **5:00pm**. Our Masses are online every 2nd Saturday-of-the-month.

Upcoming Events:

Zoom Invitations for January 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 8th. Invitations will be sent Friday, January 7. 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, January 5.

Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together in January

Happy New Year everyone! Our first Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together for 2022 is Saturday, January 22nd, from 5:00 to 6:00 pm. All are welcome regardless of whether or not you've attended in the past! Toni will send out the Zoom link the Friday before. Please contact me at Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com if you have questions. Hope to see you then! -- Josie Miranda, Sophia Christi Communications Team

Pastoral Update:

Next Council Meeting – Saturday, January 15

Our next Council meeting will take place from 11am to 1pm on January 15. We will continue to pursue the question of how Sophia Christi might participate in the two-year global process Pope Francis initiated Oct. 17 to further the creation of a truly synodal church. Your thoughts are needed as we create a plan for making progressive and alternative Catholic voices heard. Please send your ideas to one of the Council members, or Toni, before Jan. 15. Portland Council members: Kathleen Glover, Mike Newton, and Rachel Wheeler. Eugene Council members: Jessica Katon, Josie Miranda, Anna Lukatis and Carol Zolkoske.

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.

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 December 3rd for the December 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.

If we approach Christmas in the spirit of shepherds and Magi, we come with awe, with wonder. We perceive goodness, we feel invited/wanted, we make room for the others called here. As a global network of lives entangled with each other by threads a virus has inadvertently made more visible, we fill the air with our exhalations and breathe in the exhalations of everyone around us—inevitably. We are connected. All life is connected through breath. Even in the rivers and oceans of the world, oxygen is life.

Epiphany means "appearance" or "manifestation". Christians celebrate the manifestation of Christ to the world beyond Jesus' Jewish roots, and out to the Gentiles, by way of the Magi (Mt 2: 1-2). The Epiphany underscores the inclusivity of the Gospel—no one is left out, everyone is invited to come to the "crib", to kneel before Wisdom, Truth, Love and Goodness. As in 1st century Jerusalem, so also in the 21st. Wisdom invites all of us to kneel before Humility Personified as this Holy infant is presented to the world. Mystery has found us and brought us here, under the Star that rose in the East. A new day dawned then, and a newness is dawning now. We can't see where we are headed but epiphanies are happening all around us as we observe the underlying currents, the 'signs' and significance of events, the sudden and inexplicable blows to our expectations.

We are one people, one globe, one family. The Scriptures of the world point us toward this realization and understanding. Christmas through Epiphany is a manifestation of this truth. I believe Spirit is using all the chaos and fear, all the raw emotion, to help us get to that Divinely revealed truth of who WE are. Spirit doesn't create the messes we find ourselves in; Spirit **uses** all the pain and detritus, all the needs underlying the chaos, to move us in the direction of what is true, good and beautiful, what is care and belonging, what is wholeness and thriving. Epiphany caps the season, revealing the embodiment of Divinity in the heart and soul of the world. Revelation is dawning and being reinforced each day.

Next week we come to the waters of the Jordan as Jesus approaches John for baptism. Another biblical epiphany erupts on the scene as Spirit descends and a voice calls out "this is my beloved child, on whom my favor rests." We, standing alongside Jesus, receive our ministerial instructions. We will go into the desert to ponder what we've heard and wrestle with our own demons and "put them behind us" to the extent we are able. We have a mission and our mission is extraordinary in its great simplicity—we must **include** everyone and all things. We must act on the belief we propound—we are ONE FAMILY. Everything and everyone **belongs**.

Happy New Year,

Toni

