

February 6, 2022

Dear People,

Behind the scenes of everyday occurrences an invisible Divine hand waves a playful 'hello' like a child excitedly asking: "do you see me?" Yet I often go about my day being virtually oblivious to that delightful hand and miss the pleasure of simply living! The movements, feelings and thoughts that circulate through the minutes and hours of a day become background rather than the precious life-moments that they are. Too often I'm merely passing through, my attention on some task, my concerns tethered to an event having occurred moments before or a plan I'm making for something in the future. The rich experience of living goes unnoticed, and the day draws to a close without much of a nod given to the living of it. But life is not just "what we do" every day. Life is God speaking, inviting, connecting, revealing, challenging, loving, soothing, surprising, inspiring, supporting and guiding. It is, as Richard Rohr reminded the readers of his Daily Meditations on Thursday, "God coming to us disguised as our life." Living a spiritual life naturally draws us deeper into ordinary details, inviting us to witness and appreciate them with an open heart. Hidden within normal circumstances are Divine invitations to see, hear and feel the presence of God at the core of who we are, and in the revelatory crevices of our world. At the periphery of actions we take, words we speak, choices we make each hour of every day is the Divine face, loving what She beholds, accepting and encouraging the Truth of who we are even when we ourselves are off course in expressing that holy reality. God comes to us, lives through us and in us, disguised as our life. This is true as well in the life of a community.

How has God come to Sophia Christi disguised as our communal life? What is God doing in and through this small group of people in the Pacific Northwest that Spirit wants us to share with the larger Church? In today's first reading Isaiah offers a vision of God, seated on a lofty throne, surrounded by angels announcing the Sacred Presence and crying "Holy, holy, holy...all the earth is filled with God's glory!" Isaiah, witnessing the power of that cry as his house shakes violently and fills with smoke, believes he is doomed. One of the angels takes a coal from the altar and touches Isaiah's mouth with it, removing all barriers to God's life and love within him. He is able then to hear God asking: "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" We know Isaiah's answer: "Here I am, send me!" What about us? How might we respond?

The Synod process Pope Francis initiated in October is calling our community, and others like us, to speak our prophetic truth. Francis wants to hear from the margins of this church we are part of. Our needs and experiences have been ignored for decades by the institution he attempts to shepherd, and many of us bear the scars of abandonment and ridicule. But there is also freedom in being ignored and a perspective of church that has developed out here on the periphery. Our imaginings of what church can be and our vision of the future has been shaped and honed by experiencing community outside the grip of patriarchal dominance. We are being asked, I believe, to share what we've learned and what we know because we've been left to co-create our life with each other and with God beyond the purview of the institution. "Whom shall I send to tell the story from the margins?" God asks Sophia Christi. God has come to us disguised as our communal life for 15 years as of this coming August. Here we are. Our life experience has been God's own heart-beat thrumming through our veins, energizing our nervous system, encouraging our faith despite being ostracized and deserted by the patriarchal establishment. What is ours to say? What is our prophetic witness in the face of ostracism and the very denial of our existence? We are called to speak our truth now. I hope you are willing to take part in the listening sessions (see below). Together we can say, with the prophet Isaiah: "Here we are, God. Send us."

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, **February 12**, at **5:00pm**. Our Masses are online every 2nd Saturday-of-the-month.

Upcoming Events:

Zoom Invitations for February 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 12th. Invitations will be sent Friday, February 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, February 9.

Special February Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together--Learn more about the Synod

Our next Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together is on Saturday, February 26 from 5:00 to 6:00 pm. During our gathering we'll spend some time exploring a few ideas for participating in the upcoming synod. Toni will send the Zoom invitation via email the Friday before. Please email me if you have any questions at Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com. --Josie Miranda, Sophia Christi Communications Team.

Synod "Listening Sessions" Begin

Pope Francis has requested the world's Bishops to gather input from the people on their concerns and disappointments with the Catholic church and their hopes, dreams and aspirations for a "New Church". We are planning "listening sessions" to gather this information from our Sophia Christi Community. These will begin at the end of February at the Social Gathering and continue through March. Please begin to think about how to express your feelings regarding the Church. We will send our results directly to Rome rather than through the local Archbishop. – Kathleen Glover, Council Member

Pastoral Update:

Volunteers Needed

There are many things that keep a community together and functioning well, and most of them involve the willing hands and big hearts of interested and caring people. A few require some level of skill, or a willingness to try something new. Two years into a pandemic that moved us to online liturgies and social gatherings, we've been relying on a handful of people to do a variety of tasks. I would love to see our circle of involvement expand, beginning with the Zoom liturgies since they are the online face of Sophia Christi. You can simply reply to this email and let me know what you would like to do or learn how to do.

- * Coordinate/Moderate Zoom liturgies
- * Music Ministry (play an instrument, sing)
- * Lector (read first and second Scripture readings)
- * Read community's responses during Zoom Masses
- * Write Intercessions

January 15 Council Meeting Summary

The Pastoral Council met on January 15 via Zoom for its regular meeting. Three topics seemed to predominate in our discussions as we plan for 2022: 1. After first discussing our ongoing concerns about keeping members connected and what a return to in-person Masses might look like, we agreed that we will likely be celebrating Mass together via Zoom for the foreseeable future and that we could take this opportunity to lean into the advantages to that online experience. 2. A few members of the Council are making plans for listening sessions this year in response to the synodality process Pope Francis has begun. 3. We began looking ahead to our August celebration of Sophia Christi's fifteenth anniversary and what that might look like. Anna Lankutis, Josie Miranda and Mike Newton volunteered to get things started. They will invite the community to help plan and create our 15th Anniversary Celebration. One idea is to gather remnants of our journey and history into a booklet of some kind. Brainstorming will continue. Community ideas and contributions welcome. - Submitted by Pastoral Council Secretary Rachel Wheeler

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

When I reflected, for this newsletter article, concerning my participation as a Sophia Christi council member, two words came to mind. Discernment and Service. It seems from the times of the early church until the present, individuals have been called to offer service in various ways to support and sustain the communities of Faith. One way I have chosen to serve is by meeting with Pastor Toni and other council members to, currently, navigate the waters of the ongoing Covid pandemic, and use our best abilities of discernment as a group, to assist Sophia Christi to continue to be a rich gathering place for shared Eucharist, and continued community support for each other as we await the time when we may again see each other actually in person. I especially pray for the grace of discernment to come to our council as we continue to chart a reasonable course for all into the coming year. There is much being served up on the "plate", so I pray, "Holy Wisdom, Holy Sophia be with us all". Jeremiah 29:11: I know well the plans I have in mind for you... plans for your welfare, not for woe! plans to give you a future full of hope." May the blessings of Spirit be with and remain with all of us as the community of Sophia Christi. –Anna Lankutis, Council Member

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 4th for the March 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.

Visualize a cosmic nervous system that connects every single thing in existence with every other thing. Like the web of nerves in our own bodies, this cosmic nervous system connects every cell in the vast universal body to every other cell. The entire web vibrates when an obscure thread is touched. I experience this phenomenon if I bang my arm against a table in the dark and feel a sympathetic pain in my toes. My body is one massive receptor and transmitter of sensations, one unified whole. So also the body of Earth and every other body on the planet. The individual life forms of our global eco-system are integrally connected with each other, with the solar system, and with the Universe as a whole.

‘Church’, in its truest identity, encompasses all of this. Church is the People of God gathered together for the purpose of recognizing their oneness with each other and all life, all Reality, in the one and only Cosmic ‘Body’ of Creation. We name that reality ‘God’. Paul calls it ‘the Body of Christ.’ The work of the church is to gather us together, assist us in letting go of old wounds so we can forgive and be forgiven of injuries and mistakes, so we can re-forge and reclaim our bonds with each other and with the Sacred Wholeness of All-That-Is. It is a place and a consciousness that fosters the renewal of our sacred covenant with Spirit and with this Garden Dwelling we’ve been given—Holy Mother Earth.

Church is all of us together under one roof—the only roof that can shelter all of us at the same time—the roof of the Sky, the roof of the heavens. We nestlings on this vibrant planet live within the surrounding Womb of the Cosmos. Nothing exists outside that Womb; all is contained and nurtured within Her. The precious feeling of connection, and even the simple ‘knowing’ that we are inextricably connected, is God arriving disguised as ordinary life. We live in a Sanctuary, and the grand cosmic nervous system that weaves us together has woven us into Mother Earth, spliced our human nerves and veins with those of all her creatures, including the grasses, hills and rivers. All of this, as Rohr and Paul himself would remind us, is the vast and incomprehensible “Body of Christ.” We are in it inevitably, whether we believe or disbelieve. We are part of each other as the voltage running through our central nervous system is the life force of the one God. Our bodies are built to receive the signals of the entire eco-system. We are one-with all of it because God, Life-Force, Holy-Connection is the baseline of all that is. It is the Truth of Oneness—many parts, one body—in the Unifying Whole of the one and only God.

Warmest of blessings this sunny winter’s day,

Toni

