

April 3, 2022

Please Note change in the April Mass schedule (below)

Dear Community,

“Thus says The Most High...see, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the desert I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers.” –Is 43:16-21

Like many of you whose dreams were dashed through decades of backlash against the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, I haven't had a lot of hope for Pope Francis' Synod on Synodality. But something changed in my thinking recently when I realized his emphasis on “journeying together” is a rallying cry for implementing, in concrete terms, who and what we say we are—one people, one Body, one large table in a single ‘common home’. Unprecedented in human history, the global reach of technology allows the voices of potentially everyone on the planet to be heard. And this is the intent of the Synod. The Vatican website asks: **“Who is the Synod for?”** Answer: *“The main subjects...are all the baptized because all the baptized are...the **sensus fidelium**, the living voice of the **People of God**. At the same time...it is important for the baptized to hear the voices of other people in their local context, including people who have left the practice of the faith, people of other faith traditions, people of no religious belief. Special care should be taken to involve those persons who may risk being excluded: women, the handicapped, refugees, migrants, the elderly, people who live in poverty, Catholics who rarely or never practice their faith, etc.”*

In other words, the synod is a call to embrace the concept of ‘journeying together’ on this fragile planetary spaceship, asking for Spirit's guidance in a process of spiritual discernment and open-hearted collaboration. These are the ideals we've held since the inclusive vision of Vatican II took hold of our minds and opened the door to full participation in the mission and life of the community. That door was closed for five painful decades before Francis arrived in Rome, and there are many still working around the clock to limit its angle of opening while hoping to close and lock that door again. But communities like ours around the world are taking this process seriously and wedging our bodies into the gap created by this renewed possibility, working to embrace and include the varied gifts of all Sophia's children.

While this global process continues for another year and a half Sophia Christi is engaged in a smaller version of what ‘journeying together’ means for us on the micro level. At the Council meeting on March 19th I spoke of my own pandemic exhaustion and noted a similar exhaustion in others. These last two years have changed all of us, and the world itself continues to change. Our community, in Portland and Eugene, lost physical contact but, in the interim, we have gained a fuller sense of who we are. For the last 24 months we have met together in one ‘place’ each month, praying together as one Sophia Christi. And Sophia Herself has been anything but silent during this time. Her invitations to serve others in a variety of ways are relentless. And they are also shifting. The figure of Wisdom/Sophia in Proverbs is playful. She is creative. I see a playful, creative energy emerging that wants to engage many more members of the community in ministerial roles. We, too, are in a synodal process, journeying together, listening deeply to Sophia's promptings. All of you carry part of the soul of Sophia Christi. I ask you to pray with me, imagine with me, think and talk with me and with each other. Something new is afoot. “See I am doing something new,” says our God. “In the desert I make a way.”

Readings for Liturgies can be found on the USCCB website at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/>.

Upcoming Events:

PLEASE NOTE: Change in April Online Mass Schedule

We will NOT meet the second Saturday in April. We will, instead, gather for our **Easter Vigil Mass via Zoom** on Saturday, **April 16**, at **6:00pm**. We will resume our usual second Saturday-of-the-month schedule in May.

Zoom Invitations for April Liturgy

If you have regularly participated in Sophia Christi liturgies, or have recently requested a Zoom invitation to our online Masses, you will automatically receive a Zoom invitation this month for the Easter Vigil on the 16th. Invitations will be sent Friday, April 15. 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, April 13.

Easter Vigil Information: April 16th at 6:00 pm

For our celebration of Easter Vigil, set your table with: an unlit candle, a match or lighter, a bowl of water, bread, wine or grape juice. Christ invites each one of us into communion as members of the One Body, the Body of Christ.

For the first seven or eight centuries Christians who gathered for Eucharist were fully conscious that the risen Jesus was in their midst. Jesus was truly present, as he said he would be when they gathered in his name, feeding them with his Spirit in and through each other and in the elements of bread and wine on their table. Over the last several years developments in technology have taught us that 'Presence' doesn't depend on physical proximity. It depends, instead, on intention and attention. The common table now includes our individual tables connected as one—one virtual table—around which we gather, pray, consecrate elements of bread and wine, and receive who we are, the Body of Christ. We have learned that the 'body' of another need not be within reach for their actual "presence" to be real. Therefore, we celebrate Eucharist with the sure knowledge that Christ is in our midst, and the elements on each of our tables are linked through the mystery of "real" presence. At the dawn of the fifth century St. Augustine said: "If you are members of the Body of Christ then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive."

Pastoral Update

Sophia Christi's Synod "Listening Session" April 5th via Zoom, 6:00-7:00pm

Join Us on April 5th for Another Opportunity to Participate in the Synodal Process. We continue to gather input for our Sophia Christi response to Pope Francis' synodal call. On Tuesday, April 5th we'll hold a special synodal listening session from 6:00 to 7:00 pm via Zoom. It's important for as many of us as possible to participate in this opportunity in order to ensure that our synodal letter reflects the thoughts and prayers of everyone in our community. Toni will send out the Zoom invitation on Monday, April 4th. Please contact Josie if you have any questions at Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com. --Josie Miranda, Rachel Wheeler, Kathleen Glover

Summary of March 19th Council Meeting

The Pastoral Council met on March 19 to discuss important ongoing concerns of the community. The Council members discussed continuing the Zoom Masses, appreciative of this format that allows folks who do not live in Portland or Eugene to be an ongoing part of the community. We also discussed concerns about Zoom fatigue and other forms of burnout that might occur because Toni and some members may be overextended in their commitments to support the Zoom Masses and other current

initiatives. We discussed how the use of the monthly Zoom social gatherings to foster discussion about the Synodality process has been going, appreciative of the input that members are sharing about their experiences of and hopes for the Church. We also continued our planning of an important milestone our community will celebrate in August: Sophia Christi's fifteenth anniversary! Members of Sophia Christi Catholic Community can expect to hear more about these issues in the next months. - Submitted by Rachel Wheeler, Pastoral Council Secretary

Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together April 23

You are invited to attend this month's Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together on Saturday, April 23rd, from 5:00 to 6:00 pm. These monthly socials are a relaxed, informal opportunity for our community to gather together and enjoy one other's company. All are welcome! For more information, contact Josie 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 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

I had planned to write a reflection that addressed the issue of white privilege and the importance for us as Christians to identify the biases we carry within, but after three attempts, I had to give up. I'd tried to write from a dispassionate point of view, but after my third attempt I realized that it was impossible for me to write solely from the head while ignoring what was in my heart; the exercise turned out to be more emotionally challenging than I'd anticipated.

When I was 8 years old, my family moved from a low income, predominantly Latino neighborhood into a house located on a predominantly white, blue-collar street. I remember thinking at the time that we had somehow moved up in the world because there was a sidewalk in front of our house. However, instead of being welcomed into the neighborhood we were subjected to a continuous stream of racist abuse that lasted 10 long years. My parents weren't in a position financially to move us away from that hell on earth, and so for a decade we simply endured.

After some 40 years I thought I'd already worked through the pain and grief that colored this time in my early life. Trying to write this month's reflection showed me that I hadn't, and that there was more work to be done. But I believe that Spirit understood that it was time for me to restart the process of healing, and so She prompted me to volunteer to provide the April councilmember newsletter reflection. It wasn't the reflection I'd planned to offer you, but it was the one I needed to share. --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 March 28 for the April 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.

Next weekend Palm Sunday leads us on the journey of Holy Week as Jesus enters Jerusalem on a carpet of branches amid the adulation of a large crowd of supporters. The Temple authorities and their Roman cohorts are waiting for him, determined to crush this grassroots movement he has inspired. His followers still believe he will lead them to victory over the Roman occupation of their territory. They aren't prepared for the servant role he assumes, and encourages them to imitate, as he celebrates Passover with them for the last time. They walk into that reserved room blindly, not knowing what is coming but primed for celebration. Jesus, however, alert to the tortuous road ahead, uses these last moments with his friends to try, once again, to engage them in his mission. He washes their feet. He breaks the Seder 'bread of affliction'..."my body," he says. He senses the gathering storm of animosity surrounding his methods and his mission. Though deeply frightened, sweating blood at Gethsemane we're told, he faces into those winds, manages fear... somehow, remains steadfast...somehow, non-judgmental in the face of betrayal, and humble before his persecutors. We walk this road with him during Holy Week not seeing, perhaps not wanting to see, the devastating reality of his own people turned against him. Who fanned the anger of the crowd who shouted for Barabbas? Who incited the violence against this man? Stripped of his place in the larger community of believers, scorned and humiliated as a low-life criminal, he is deftly and unceremoniously eliminated as a threat to the power structure of civic and religious authority.

Easter isn't about victory or triumph or even exclusively the celebration of life over death. It is about that tree there at the end of the road, the intersection of those terrifying cross-beams, and what it takes to face them. We need strength and Divine support to feel and grieve the mystery of suffering, blaming, meaningless destruction and tragedy. The cross must be met, birth pains endured. Jesus bore the nothingness that has no answer..."my God, why have you forsaken me?" And then... he passed through...to the "new thing" God was doing in his life and in our world through him. The pattern is the same for all of us. We are co-creators, not Creators. We follow where we are led as Jesus did, move in the direction we're pointed using our gifts to navigate the paths we've both chosen and been handed. On the other side of that cross is life. "Come through," whispers the Divine midwife. "Come through." Happy Easter.

May the journey of Holy Week usher you into New Life,

Toni