

June 5, 2022

Pentecost Blessings,

The Feast of Pentecost has long been considered the birthday of the Church. On that day, somewhere around 33 C.E., all the disciples had gathered in a room to celebrate the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) which occurs fifty days after Passover. This pivotal Jewish harvest festival drew Jews from surrounding nations to Jerusalem each year where large crowds gathered in the streets, speaking a wide variety of languages. While the disciples remained inside, perhaps still fearful of religious authorities, they heard a noise, like a violent, rushing wind and tongues of fire appeared over the head of each one. Each one. Both women and men were in that room. “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them,” says Luke in the first reading from Acts of the Apostles today. Because the noise was so loud, people in the streets heard it and assembled outside the building wondering what was happening. “Surely all of these people are Galileans!” someone says, “yet we each hear them in our native tongue. “All of these people” includes women who, we can rightly assume, are also speaking words Spirit Herself is giving them to speak.

There is something inherently unsettling in the idea that Pentecost is the Church’s birthday because it seems to absolutize the institution of church. The disciples celebrating Shavuot in that room centuries ago were not a ‘church.’ They were a community comprised of women, men and, probably, children. Their spirit-filled experience gave them courage to face the crowds, to speak vulnerably from their hearts, to include people of every nation known to them at the time in the Community-of-Christ they were, rather unknowingly, beginning to form. This was an evolving movement rather than a ‘church.’ These are our forebears, ordinary people like us caught up together in a developing spiritual mission. That mission—to live the love-command of their crucified-and-risen Teacher, he who banished no one from his circle, and included those society chose to condemn or ignore.

The institutional church carries scriptures, traditions and gathered wisdom from generation to generation down through the ages. In this vital service it has tremendous value. I am deeply grateful to have been raised in this Church, to have been exposed to its living tradition of mysticism from an early age, and to have experienced a visceral sense of God’s presence under the guidance of humble pastors and dedicated nuns in my formative years. But I’ve learned to see the underbelly of institutional thinking, its self-righteousness, exclusive claims on truth, denial of the primacy of conscience, insistence on blind obedience to patriarchal laws and viewpoints, its stark misogyny, homophobia, racism, sexism and adherence to the realm of the state when its own power structures are threatened.

Avery Dulles, in his book titled “Model of the Church”, wrote this: “Religion [and religious institutions] can be elitist and exclusive in its claims to have access to the Divine...Religion can and still often does miss the point: this presence of the Divine is universal. It is not confined to any group, people, or religious affiliation. The task of religion is not to bring the sacred to us. Its task is to identify, name and affirm the sacred already in our midst and call us to give witness to it by the way we live. So we need to develop a prayerful attitude to life that honors the presence of the Divine everywhere and in all people. And personally, we need to cultivate a prayerful attitude to life that leads us to wonder, amazement, appreciation, and gratitude.”

I believe this is what those disciples were doing that first Pentecost, beginning to see and experience the sacred in all people, and to open their hearts in wonder and gratitude. It is our invitation as well in this troubled year of a frighteningly transformative age.

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

Upcoming Events:

Online Mass Schedule Continues This Month

Mass via Zoom will be Saturday, **June 11**, at **5:00pm**. Our Masses are online every 2nd Saturday-of-the-month.

Zoom Invitations for May 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. Invitations will be sent Friday, June 10. 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, June 8.

Pastoral Update

Celebrate Sophia Christi's 15th Anniversary—Call for Submissions

Dear Sophia Christi community members—

On August 13, 2022, Sophia Christi Catholic Community celebrates 15 years as a parish. To mark this milestone, we are compiling a collection of commemorative photos and writings that tell the story of Sophia Christi over the years, but we need your help. We invite you to share your thoughts and stories about Sophia Christi by submitting a brief paragraph or a photo for inclusion in our commemorative compilation. Submissions and/or questions should be sent to Anna Lankutis at lankutisa@gmail.com. The deadline for submissions is June 15th.

Sincerely, Sophia Christi 15th Anniversary committee

Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together on Hiatus Until July

We will not hold a Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together during the month of June. Our next gathering will be Saturday, July 23rd. See you next month! --Josie Miranda

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 have a need that the Care Team might respond to, please contact Kathleen Glover gloverconnection@yahoo.com or Pastor Toni.

Council Member Reflection

A while back as I was reading one of Toni's Newsletters, she wrote something that really struck home for me. She was writing about people who are, perhaps, a little too goal oriented. They tend to focus so much on the current project, or the next one or two projects, that they forget to notice their own life as it happens around them. When I thought about it, I realized I do that. When I take my dog

for walks, I focus so much on watching out for big dogs, or making sure she doesn't eat some nasty thing, that I was forgetting to notice the beauty around us as we walked. The trees, the houses, the flowers, the fragrances of Spring... In addition to teaching us about God, good priests teach us what I think of as Life-lessons. —Mike Newton, Council President

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 we celebrate the Trinity—Trinity Sunday—a concept not universally accepted by Christians everywhere. As a student at St. Patrick's school I was, of course, introduced to the Patrick's shamrock as teachers tried to explain three persons in one God. Then I was regularly told that the Trinity is a mystery we accept but can't understand. Of course, the entire concept of 'God' is a mystery we can't understand, but I was still firmly taught that God was a 'he', as was Christ (because that was Jesus), and the Holy Spirit was a 'he' as well! No 'mystery' there, you see! Though traditional theology hasn't moved very far from this conceptualization of God as male, progressive theology has been rapidly developing other concepts in the last few years. Feminist theologians and scripture scholars, interreligious studies, and scientific exploration of this amazingly expanding Universe are all having a profound influence on the entire field of Theology.

Theological studies in the West for centuries focused its attention on the first and second 'persons' of the Trinity while nearly ignoring that illusive third person—the paraclete, the dove, the indefinable 'something' Jesus breathed on the disciples following his resurrection, and those pesky tongues of fire said to have descended on them at Pentecost. Now, though, many who have renounced institutional religion, who identify as "spiritual-but-not-religious," are helping Christianity itself move into a new moment of reflection on that illusive third 'person' of the Trinity. From time immemorial indigenous peoples have experienced the presence and movement of Spirit in their lives and communities. In many ways the industrialized and capitalized West is being dragged into that primary, 'primitive', understanding as more and more of us return to a deep respect for the natural world prompted by the global climate crisis. We are beginning to wake up to the fact we are anchored and supported in day-to-day life by this living, breathing, spirit-infused planet. Spirit is the animating principle and love-force binding us together as family—humans, earth and all our feathered, finned, leaf-ed and furry relations. The mystics of every religious tradition have seen this, have known and taught this Deep Truth in so many ways throughout history.

We are moving out of an age of isolated individualism into this budding new age of community. With that movement comes a new concept of God as a Holy-Communion-of-Persons. God-As-Community. We have been schooled in the belief we are all 'made in the

image and likeness of God', and we have understood it to mean that each of us, individually, is made in God's image, with Divine dignity inherent in who we are. This is still a foundational concept, and one we sadly still refuse to honor, still refuse to implement in our laws, everyday practices, corporate procedures and even our social-justice activities. We need to dust off this worn idea and have it mean something concrete and tangible in the way we treat each other. This, perhaps, must be our first priority in such an individualistic culture. But the individual alone, outside a communal structure, is like an infant without family or dedicated care-givers. Survival may be possible, but mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health is unlikely. What the new theology of Trinity is inviting us to realize is that humans are made in the image of a community-of-persons. Our duty as Christians, then, is to build the 'beloved community' here on earth. Because we, together, are made in the image of God—God-as-Community.

Early summer blessings to all of you,

Toni