

September 4, 2022

Dear Sophia Christi,

In his 'Spiritual Exercises' St. Ignatius tells us to "seek and find God in all things." This statement moves us to the very core of our incarnational faith and is the fundamental Truth at the root of sacramental theology. God's presence in every created thing is the heart and soul of our theology of Creation. It helps us see the sacraments as portals of encounter with God's presence in and through the 'things' God has created. These 'things' include all physical reality—wheat, grapes, water, fire, earth and air, of course, but also all breathing 'things' and the seemingly static and elemental 'things' that often escape our notice as we handle the multitude of details in our daily lives. Indigenous peoples have lived this 'knowing' of sacred Presence within all that exists from time immemorial. They have held this awareness for all humanity in the face of generations of exploitive efforts to destroy our memory of the sacred indwelling that nurtures and supports the physical, sensual world in which, and on which, we live. Sacramental theology is born of reverencing the heartbeat of the Divine within God's holy creation.

As a child in parochial school, I was taught to believe that Jesus was uniquely present in the consecrated bread and wine at Mass. This was before Vatican II broadened Eucharistic theology to recognize the presence of Jesus in the community assembled around the Table of Christ and God's 'real' presence and voice in Scripture. Almost overnight (or so it seemed in those early days of liturgical reform) rigid beliefs and practices that were held and taught for centuries began to be replaced. Church laws changed. Concepts about sin changed. Theological precepts were overhauled. Rituals, traditions and sacramental customs changed, often dramatically. The ecumenical nature of the Second Vatican Council also meant that the perennial wisdom contained in other ancient belief systems began to be incorporated into a larger Catholic worldview.

Now, as environmental science vividly demonstrates the fragility of ecosystems, and satellite images show us the global effects of a strictly utilitarian approach to Earth's resources, the indigenous attunement to the sacred within nature comes into our Christian theological focus. The Mundurucu people of Brazil, for example, believe God is in all things. Many Amazonian people believe that every element of creation has a spirit, and God is in everything they see, hear, touch and taste. Often the word they use for that spirit is the Spanish or Portuguese word for mother. It is the 'Mother' within all things. Gregory Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries, says this in his book, *Forgive Everyone Everything*: "We are sacramental to our core when we think that everything is holy. The holy is not just found in the supernatural but in the Incarnational here and now. The truth is that sacraments are happening all the time if we have the eyes to see."

If we allow ourselves to follow the vision of the mystics, the discoveries of quantum and astrophysics, as well as the spiritual experiences of our indigenous sisters and brothers, we might be able to see the teachings of our own tradition with new eyes. Coming to the Eucharistic table each month, with bread and wine or grape juice on our individual altars, we can remember what we already know—that God is already within what we consecrate. The sacrament opens the window of our soul to the Soul of the Universe if we let the Sacred within all things speak to our heart. That's the purpose of a sacrament, to help us feel the Presence of God, our God who is always within us and within everything we can see, hear, taste, touch and know. Sacraments don't make God present; Divine Presence just IS.

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, **September 10**, at **5:00pm**. Our Masses are online every 2nd Saturday-of-the-month.

Zoom Invitations for September 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, September 9. 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 7.

Pastoral Update

Celebrating 15 years

Our virtual Fifteenth Anniversary celebration last month was beautiful and inspiring in so many ways, ending with a montage of photos from Sophia Christi events over the years. I want to thank John Coutu, our resident photographer, for the hundreds of photos he's captured at Sophia Christi events from that first anniversary at University Park United Methodist Church in Portland to the Zoom photo he took of our online Mass in July! The Commemorative Booklet he created specifically for this anniversary can be found on our website (information below) and is a testament to many who have passed through our doors. A special thank you to Rachel Wheeler who created the moving slide show that capped our August liturgy and, in fact, created all the slides for songs we sang throughout the Mass. So many people offered their ideas, time, and creativity to making this anniversary special in every way. Thank you, parish council members, for your help and encouragement on the booklet, to the liturgy team, to Doug, our musician, to Anna Sasaki who wrote the Intercessions, to our readers and to Jessica Katon, our Zoom moderator. Since we record all of our virtual Masses, if anyone is interested in viewing the 15th Anniversary Mass please contact Toni for a link to the recording. We now enter our 'sweet 16th' year. Blessings everyone!

Toni's Vacation

Toni will be on vacation from September 15 through the month of October. There will be no newsletter or Mass in October. The newsletter will return November 6th with Mass the following Saturday, November 12.

Join Us For our Next Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together—September 24th

Our next Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together is Saturday, September 24th, from 5:00 to 6:00 pm. These relaxed, informal gatherings are a wonderful opportunity for us to come together and enjoy each other's company. All are welcome and there are no expectations around participation. Toni will send the Zoom link out the Friday before our gathering. Please contact Josie via email if you have any questions (Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com). See you on the 24th! --Josie Miranda

Fifteenth Anniversary Commemorative Booklet

If you go to our website—sophiachristi.org—and click on the cross icon beneath the column “In Our Community” on the Homepage, it will take you to the booklet created by John Coutu specifically for our 15th Anniversary celebration. John has taken photos at most of our anniversary events, and at picnics, and potlucks. We also have a few pictures taken by others, even a couple from our first community-wide retreat at Silver Falls. Over countless hours John curated hundreds of photos and created an online booklet you can download and print if you are interested. We hope you enjoy viewing some of Sophia Christi’s history through the faces, ministries and activities that have graced our community over the years.

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.

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.

The parables of the lost sheep and lost coin are featured in the Gospel next weekend. I remember once losing the key to my house on a hike in the mountains! Was that ever a frantic (and thankfully successful) search! I imagine most of us know the gut-wrenching experience of losing something we treasure, and the exhilaration, or major relief, we feel when it is found. However, when these particular parables are set against the backdrop of nature as sacrament then loss itself takes on a new and deeper meaning. It is no longer simply about objects, or even sheep. It’s about ecosystems, about what we are losing every day that will never be found and can’t be replaced—entire species of animals and plants, as well as forests, rivers, breathable air, clean water, glaciers, oceans. How do we manage to find peace with losses of such magnitude? And what does the Gospel have to say to us in the midst of environmental losses that can’t be avoided now, and can’t be repaired? What do we

search for when facing ecological losses like these?

There is no simple answer to this question, but I do believe reverence for the spirit within all things is the place to begin. When we lost our connection with the Soul of the Earth and the heartbeat of the Universe, we lost our way. The result is what we see in the raging fires, droughts, floods and devastating vectors of disease circling the globe. Reverence begins with remembering that living things are sacred, that trees and squirrels are teachers with earth-wisdom to share, that bees are responsible for the raspberries on my cereal, and that those unsightly dandelions feed these bees. It's that simple in the garden, yet the entire Earth is a garden and everything nurtures everything else. Perhaps reverence is a maternal instinct and the Mundurucu people, knowing this intuitively, use the word for 'mother' to acknowledge the spirit within all things. Reverence acknowledges the sacramental nature of our Holy Garden home and can, perhaps, help us curb destruction one small step at a time.

Harvest blessings,

Toni