

November 6, 2022

Dear Sophia Christi,

According to the church calendar, November is a month of endings and remembrances. As we celebrate 'All Saints Day' and 'All Souls Day' the first and second days of the month, we remember our ancestors, those who have gone before us, recalling their lives, cherishing their wisdom, and acknowledging their continuing presence, love and assistance as we journey through life. We are part of a holy procession, known in our tradition as the 'communion of saints,' our ancestors and loved ones who walk with us, offering support and guidance, as we make our own way home. I think of these things in a special way today.

I am in Philadelphia for the second time in a month. My partner Patti and I have been coming here to celebrate Yom Kippur with her mother, Dulcie, for the last 10 years. It is a tradition I have always cherished. But the day before we were to leave Portland, we got a call saying Dulcie was taken to the emergency room. We flew out the following morning and arrived after visiting hours that evening. Hospital staff waived restrictions and allowed us to visit her in the ICU after hours. A bowel obstruction was suspected but we were told the treatment being provided often allowed obstructions to clear. We were there again the next morning, and the next, and by the second evening she was moved to a step-down unit. She was improving and we were hopeful she might be going home in a few days. That thought was Dulcie's entire focus. At one point she insisted I bring her shoes. At the end of day 5 we left for dinner and three hours later received a call from the hospital. Mom had suffered a breathing anomaly and doctors had tried everything short of intubation. Her advance directive made clear that wasn't an option. We stayed with her through the next 40 hours, and she died peacefully on Yom Kippur, the moment services began in the synagogue. I am awed by the timing of her death, and both humbled and eternally grateful to have been at her side when she stepped across the threshold. It was our final Yom Kippur with mom, a holy, sacred time.

We approach Thanksgiving as I return to writing this newsletter. I am filled with gratitude for the gift of Dulcie's life, and her continuing legacy and presence in my own. She introduced me to the depths of my own tradition the first time I had the privilege of being with her during High Holy Days in the synagogue she grew up in and was devoted to all her life.

As we move around her apartment, deciding what to do with the treasures and household furnishing she accumulated during her 96 years, I sense her love for this family as well as her continuing guidance. I have strongly felt her presence many times over these last few weeks, and 'grateful' doesn't begin to capture what I feel when I think of her now. I give thanks for being raised in a tradition that reveres our ancestors and reminds us, every year, that those who have died are still accessible. We are taught to call on our 'saints', our loved ones, to pray to them and trust their willingness and ability to intercede. As we move toward the end of yet another year, we pause to dwell for a time on all that has and continues to nurture, guide, and support our journey in life. Being grateful is a gift we offer to this present moment as well as to the future, reminding ourselves and those who follow us, that Spirit fortifies and accompanies life at every stage, blessing the ever-evolving heart and soul of humanity throughout time.

**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, **November 12**, at **5:00pm**. Our Masses are online every 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday-of-the-month.

### Zoom Invitations for November 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, November 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, November 9.

### Join Us Thanksgiving Weekend for Our November Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together

Our November Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together is **Saturday the 26th**, 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](mailto:Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com)). See you on the 26th! –Josie Miranda, Council Member

### Pastoral Update

#### Northminster Presbyterian – Building Closure

Last week Bob Larroque and I removed all of Sophia Christi's materials from Northminster Presbyterian Church because the church is closing its doors, and the building may be sold. This is the Church where the Portland part of the Sophia Christi Parish worshipped. I found it very sad. In the main entrance to Northminster, there were photos of all the Pastors that had ministered to that congregation; it went back over a hundred years. I think back on the good memories of worshipping under Toni in that church. It makes me sad to think that it will disappear. However, I am encouraged by the fact that Sophia Christi goes on. And Toni still ministers to us, though now on Zoom. That is comforting to dwell on. –Mike Newton, Council President

#### Carol Zolkoske--A Rememberance

It's been almost two months since the passing of our dear friend and Sophia Christi councilmember Carol Zolkoske, and like many of you I still find myself thinking about her often with both fondness and grief. I met Carol many years ago, when I first began attending Sophia Christi Mass in Eugene, and she immediately took me under her wing. Carol always arrived early for Mass to help set up for that evening's potluck, her own wonderful homemade dishes in hand, and after setting up we would sit together in a couple of stuffed chairs and talk about our respective spiritual journeys until just before the start of Mass, when she'd leave to prepare for her service as Toni's altar server.

I believe that when God wishes us to help guide another person along their spiritual path, the Holy Spirit taps us on the shoulder, places a lantern in our hand and then directs us to stand somewhere along the way. Carol responded to Spirit's call without reservation, shining a bright light that helped me find my footing as I learned to walk in my newly found Catholic faith. There are no words that can fully express my gratitude for the blessing of having Carol in my life, and while I miss the sound of her reassuring voice, I know with all my heart that

she's still with me, continuing to guide my journey with her spiritually brilliant light. --Josie Miranda

### **In Case You Missed It -- Fifteenth Anniversary Commemorative Booklet Available**

If you go to our website—[sophiachristi.org](http://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 15<sup>th</sup> 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. We would love to hear your stories and, if you are willing, add them to our newsletter in the next few months.

### **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](mailto:lankutisa@gmail.com), or Rachel Wheeler [rastonwinchel@hotmail.com](mailto: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@yahoos.com](mailto:gloverconnection@yahoos.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](http://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.

As we reach the conclusion of each liturgical year our readings encourage us to think about endings—the ending of our own lives, the ending of systems we’ve relied on—while fostering an awareness that endings are, at the same time, beginnings. Our readings next Saturday will continue the theme of both endings and new beginnings, offering assurance that God is present in chaos and justice will triumph in the end. We are urged to patiently endure what we can’t control, and to listen for words and guidance from Spirit that is always available if we

have ears to hear. The wisdom of our ancestors resides not only in Scripture, but also in our bones. The cells of our bodies know the cycles of nature, the sun's unwavering course, the wisdom of oceans, and the anchoring function of stone. We've witnessed death giving birth to life in our gardens and forests. We know life continues as forms trans-form. I'm continually inspired by lines from a 'Sweet Honey in the Rock' song called 'Breaths': "Those who have died have never, never left. The dead are not under the earth. They are in the rustling trees. They are in the groaning woods. They are in the crying grass. They are in the moaning rocks...The dead have a pact with the living. They are with us in our homes. They are with us in this crowd...Tis' the ancestors' breath in the voice of the waters." The "communion of saints" is our tradition's way of naming that same belief, and it is not meant to merely comfort the grieving. It is a truth humanity has experienced in every culture, in every age, in every corner of the world.

Early Thanksgiving blessings,

Toni