**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Christmas 2020**

*“The Word became flesh and lives among us.” 1 John*

**HELLOS AND INTRODUCTIONS (Suzie De Quattro and Betty Thompson)**

3:30 – 4:00 PM Extended family welcome to stop by and stay as long (or short) as they want.

4 PM Betty mutes everyone.

**WELCOME (Suzie)**

* Betty and I had the joy of preparing today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to Reggie Ott, Stu Sklamm, and Pat and Greg Campbell for our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Sr. Grace Hartzog, Anne Regan, Jim De Quattro, Peggy Thompson, Bill Fanelli, Richard McGinnis, Ann Jelen, and Joan Sklamm.

**SETTLING IN (Suzie)**

On this joyous Christmas Eve we remember the many years we gathered with family and friends in our churches and our homes.  This year is different, but we can still be together by sharing a common breath.  So let us begin by slowly taking one collective breath together -  in and out.   With each breath let the Spirit of God settle deeper into you as your exhale tensions from your body and distractions from your mind.  In and out.   Now let’s take 3 more breaths.  One to be here…one to be together…and one to make space for what God has incarnate in you,

Now we enter Christmas joy together by singing O Come, All Ye Faithful.

**OPENING SONG:  O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL! by Fr. Frederick Oakeley (Reggie Ott)**

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!  
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem!  
Come and behold Him,  
Born the King of Angels.  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God,  
All glory in the highest!  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning!  
Jesus, to Thee be glory given!  
Word of the Father,  
Now in flesh appearing!  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him  
Christ the Lord!

**OPENING RITUAL:  WELCOMING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST  (Isaiah 9:1-6) (Sr. Grace Hartzog)**

For the four Sundays of Advent, we prayed:  God of light, be with us in darkness.  Bring light into our world.  We have watched and waited and now, have come to Christmas.   With great rejoicing, let us arise and shine out for our light has come!  I invite you to light your Christ candle as I read from Isaiah:

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;  
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom  
a light has shone.

You have brought them abundant joy  
and great rejoicing,  
For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given;  
upon his shoulder dominion rests.  
They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,  
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.  
His dominion is vast  
and forever peaceful,sustained by fair judgment and justice,  
from this time onwards and for ever,

Let’s stay in the silence of the night and in the light of our candles as we welcome the Prince of Peace into our hurting world and into our hearts.

Musical meditation -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOEH7YRCJbg> **(Betty)**

[Decrease sound to zero between 1:37 - 1:41, when it changes key.]

**CALL TO WORSHIP/ INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Suzie)**

Beloved Community, we come together this afternoon with wonder and joy.  We know that reality can be harsh and Christmas does not ask us to make believe that isn’t true.   What the incarnation promises us is that God is always present in our lives.  And so we celebrate the birth of Jesus.  One of the most radical statements that Christianity dares to make is that God became part of our material world.  We rejoice in all that this tells us about God’s love for us.  We will begin with the Christmas story in the Gospel of Luke.

Then we will hear from John that the Word became Flesh.   Theologian Elizabeth Johnson, a Sister of St. Joseph, writes about Deep Incarnation.  She tells us that everything that exists comes from a single instant of creation.  Out of the Big Bang came the stars; out of the stardust came the Earth; out of the molecules of the Earth, came life.

Everything is connected with everything else.   And so when the Word became flesh it became part of this vast body of the cosmos.

**READING 1 –** [**Lk 2:1-14**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/luke/2?1) **(Anne Regan)**

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus  
that a census should be made of the whole world

This was the first  census,  
when Quirinius was governor of Syria.  
So all went to be registered, each to his own town.  
And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth  
to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem,  
because he was of the house and family of David,  
to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.  
While they were there,  
the time came for her to have her child,  
and she gave birth to her firstborn son.  
She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger,  
because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields  
and keeping the night watch over their flock.  
The angel of the Lord appeared to them  
and the glory of the Lord shone around them,  
and they were struck with great fear.  
The angel said to them,  
“Do not be afraid;  
for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy  
that will be for all the people.  
For today in the city of David  
a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord.  
And this will be a sign for you:  
you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes  
and lying in a manger.”  
And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel,  
praising God and saying:  
“Glory to God in the highest  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**     **(Jim De Quattro)**

We know this story so well - when God comes this close to us, we have to respond directly.   Enter the silence as one of the characters or images.  What is the story now like for you?

A starry night sky with white text

Description automatically generated with medium confidence**SILENCE**  **(Betty:** Slide 1, time, chime, stop slide**)**

**READING 2 –** [Jn 1:1-5, 9-14](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/1?1)**(Peggy Thompson)**

In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God.  He was with God in the beginning.  Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him.

What has come into being in him was life, life that was the light of all people.  And light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it.

The true light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world. The Word was the real light that gives light to everyone, coming into the world.

And the Word became flesh, and lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that was from God, full of grace and truth.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**     **(Jim)**

How are you the glory that is from God, full of grace and truth?

How do you hold God’s light that cannot be overpowered by darkness?

A picture containing text, sunset

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**SILENCE**  **(Betty:** Slide 2, time, chime, stop slide**)**

**REFLECTION –**     **(Bill Fanelli, Reggie Ott)     (Betty:** video**)**

Franciscan Father Richard Rohr writes:

To paraphrase the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart, who lived from 1260 to 1327, “We are all meant to give birth to God.” Like many of you, I will never know what it is like to physically give birth.  However, I have experienced the birth of Christ in the world many times throughout my life—in big ways and small, sometimes through grand gestures, but more often through simple acts of patience, love, hope, and mercy. To incarnate the Christ is to live out the Gospel with our lives, as faithfully and fearlessly as a woman in labor who holds nothing back in order to bring new life into the world.

During past Christmas Eve liturgies, many of us have heard the gospel of incarnation in the words that Fr. Glen Willis has sung as his homily.  Now let’s listen again to Fr. Glen who reminds that Incarnation is in every one of us, and then while we stay muted Reggie will lead us in singing together.

**Betty:**  Play 0:22 to 1:33 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ai0bERu4uxc>

**Reggie** sings: (**Betty:** Slide 3)

Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated It’s in every one of us to be wise.

Find your heart, open up both your eyes.

We can all know everything without ever knowing why.

It’s in every one of us by and by,

It’s in every one of us by and by.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**     **(Jim)**

How do you give birth to God?

How do you experience incarnation?

What simple acts incarnate Christ for you?

A picture containing text, star, outdoor object

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**SILENCE**  **(Betty:** Slide 4, time, chime, stop slide**)**

**SHARING TIME  (Richard McGinnis)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this evening as you listened to and reflected upon these readings.  We welcome everyone who wants to speak, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections.  [Long-ish pause]

Now who would like to start our sharing?  Remember to unmute yourself to speak and mute yourself again afterwards.

[Sharing]

[If there is silence more than about 30 seconds before anyone speaks:] Take whatever quiet you need before you speak.

[If there is extended silence during the sharing:] Is there anyone else who would like to share?  [Pause.]

[Stop by about 4:50.]

Thank you.  Let us pause to gather the prayers arising in us.

A picture containing outdoor, night, air, jumping

Description automatically generated**MUSICAL MEDITATION:  In Dulci Jubilo/ Good Christian Friends, Rejoice (Stu Sklamm)**  **(Betty:** Slide 6**)**

**COMMUNITY PRAYERS  (Ann Jelen)**

Now let us pray. Please end your prayers with “for this we pray.” Our response will be: God who is with us, hear our prayer.

Emmanuel, God within us, thank you for making your home in us and in our world. Help us notice you, incarnate everywhere! For this we pray.

Emmanuel, God among us, thank you for the particular people who shine out with your radiance especially brightly. Let’s each pause in quiet to think of who this is for us. [Pause.] In gratitude, we pray.

Emmanuel, closer than our breath, you give us the gift of our weekly gatherings for the past nine months – you give us the gift of this community – in solidarity with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. With all our hearts we thank you for letting yourself be born among us in this way. In gratitude, we pray.

For what else shall we pray?

(Shared prayers)

[When prayers become less frequent:]Would anyone else like to offer a prayer? [Pause.]

Thank you.  O God, we will do all we can to make our prayers real, and we entrust the outcome to you.  Amen.

**OFFERTORY   (Greg and Pat Campbell)**

**Pat or Greg:**  In our Offertory we think about what we can offer others through our time, treasure and talents.  Today we will pray in song that what we have to offer is the Good News that Jesus Christ is born.  Though still muted please join us in Go Tell it on the Mountain.

Refrain: Go tell it on the mountain

Over the [hills](https://www.definitions.net/definition/hills) and everywhere,

Go tell it on the mountain

That Jesus Christ is born!

Verse:

While [shepherds](https://www.definitions.net/definition/shepherds) kept [their](https://www.definitions.net/definition/their) watching

O'er [silent](https://www.definitions.net/definition/silent) flocks by night

Behold [throughout](https://www.definitions.net/definition/throughout) the heavens

There [shone](https://www.definitions.net/definition/shone) a holy light. Refrain

Verse:

They found a [lowly](https://www.definitions.net/definition/lowly) manger

Where the [humble](https://www.definitions.net/definition/humble) Christ was born

And God sent our salvation

On that [blessed](https://www.definitions.net/definition/blessed) Christmas morn. Refrain, twice

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION  (Betty)**

At Christmas we are reminded of what is always true.  Ordinary matter is the hiding place for Spirit and thus the very Body of God.  And so we pray:

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that you trust us to be your body in this world.

We are part of that body as we let go of all that separates us from you,

and as we embrace one another and your entire creation with merciful love.

We give you thanks for your presence in us.  [Pause.]

We remember the night before Jesus died.

At dinner with friends, Jesus knew all that would soon be asked of them,

and, loving them to the end, Jesus showed them how to care for each other

as they went out into the world.

First Jesus washed their feet.

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and work of human hands, and blessed them.

So let us, too, invite God right now into what is front and center in our lives

knowing that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it.  [Pause.]

Let us invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence.  [Pause.]

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER  (Joan Sklamm)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands to pray in harmony with Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus gave us:

**All (muted):** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Your kingdom come.  Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.  Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING  (Suzie)**

Let us extend our hands over each other and bless each other in Paul’s words to the Ephesians:

Out of God’s infinite glory, may God give us the power through the Spirit

for our hidden selves to grow strong, so that Christ may live in our hearts through faith.

And then, planted in love and built on love,

and with all the saints,

may we be filled with the utter fullness of God.

Glory be to God whose power, working in us,

can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.

Amen.

**CLOSING SONG:  JOY TO THE WORLD by Isaac Watts/Lowell Mason (Reggie)**

Joy to the world! the Lord is come;  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the world! the Savior reigns;  
Let all their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

**RESOURCES:**

Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM – Becoming Icons of Christ - <https://cac.org/becoming-icons-of-christ-2020-12-11/>

Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM – Giving Birth to Christ: Weekly Summary - <https://cac.org/giving-birth-to-christ-weekly-summary-2020-12-12/>

Sister Mary McGlone, CSJ – The Scandal of Incarnation <https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/scripture-life/fourteenth-sunday-ordinary-time-scandal-incarnation?site_redirect=1>

Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI – Incarnation, God is with us - <https://ronrolheiser.com/incarnation-god-is-with-us/#.X87WOrNOnIU>

Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ:  Deep Incarnation: Prepare to be astonished – <https://sgfp.wordpress.com/2011/02/15/deep-incarnation-prepare-to-be-astonished/>

Night sky image:  National Park Service

Sunrise image:  Betty’s cousin Allison Tucker Mansfield at Corolla, NC

Incarnation image:  Mercy International Association

<https://www.mercyworld.org/about/our-initiatives/mgp-themes/segment-1/facilitators-guide-incarnate-god-in-the-cosmos-in-person-of-jesus/>

Meditation image:  NASA - Comet Lovejoy in Ursa Major