**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for**

**The Feast of the Holy Family, Dec. 27, 2020**

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

**CHECK-IN (Now I will mute…) (Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Suzie De Quattro)**

* Introductions?
* Betty and I had the joy of preparing today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to Pat and Greg Campbell, Bob Gallagher, Reggie Ott, Marilyn and Paul Voigt, and Stu Sklamm for our music.
* Thanks to those who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Sister Marie McCarthy, Kathy Heller, Peg Duchesne, Jim De Quattro, Judy Sholes, and Maryann Dolan.

**SETTLING IN (Suzie)**

We are not all in the same place, 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 Christmas carols that will carry us from the angels’ joy into the silence of the night when Jesus was born.

**OPENING MUSIC**

**Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!** **(Greg and Pat Campbell)**

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled.”  
Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies,  
With th’angelic host proclaim:  
“Christ is born in Bethlehem.”  
Hark! The herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King!”

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Ris'n with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that we no more may die,  
Born to raise us from the earth,  
Born to give us second birth.  
Hark! The herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King!”

**O Little Town of Bethlehem** **(Bob Gallagher)**

O little town of Bethlehem  
How still we see thee lie  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight

How silently, how silently  
The wondrous gift is given  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of His heaven  
No ear may hear His coming  
But in this world of sin  
Where meek souls will receive him still  
The dear Christ enters in

**Silent Night** **(Reggie Ott)**

Silent night, holy night  
All is calm, all is bright  
'Round yon virgin Mother and Child  
Holy infant so tender and mild  
Sleep in heavenly peace  
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight!  
Glories stream from heaven afar;  
Heavenly hosts sing Al-le-lu-ia!  
Christ the Savior is born!  
Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night  
Son of God, love's pure light  
Radiant beams from Thy holy face  
With the dawn of redeeming grace  
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth  
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth  
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth

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**WELCOME / GATHERING / INTRO TO THEME (Suzie)**

Merry Christmas! This is Holy Family Sunday, when we celebrate that Jesus was born in flesh and blood, and into a family with aunts and uncles and cousins. Maybe his family had its share of the messiness that we know in our families – the families in which we are children and parents, and the families we have chosen, and the “family” of our church and society. Families can be echoes of the Trinity, which is the ultimate picture of unity with diversity. Families can be places where God is trying to be born – and God can be born in lots of ways: in our joys together, in how we bear with one another, in what we give for each other, in what we receive from each other, and in our slow learning about how to forgive each other.

Our reading today invites us, along with Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna, to ask ourselves, “What child is this” to me or to the world?

**MUSICAL REFLECTION What child is this?** **(Stu Sklamm)** (**Betty:** Slide 1)

What Child is this Who, laid to rest   
On Mary’s lap, is sleeping;   
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet   
While shepherds watch are keeping?   
This, this is Christ the King   
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.   
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud   
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh.   
Come peasant, king to own Him!   
The King of kings salvation brings.   
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.   
Raise, raise a song on high   
The virgin sings her lullaby   
Joy, joy for Christ is born,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

**READING** [LK 2:22-40](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/luke/2?22)  **(Marie McCarthy, SP)**

A reading from the 2nd chapter of Luke:

Mary and Joseph took Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord as was written in the law of the Lord.

Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; the Holy Spirit rested on him.

It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said:

“Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised, because my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all peoples, a light for revelation to the gentles and the glory of your people Israel.” Mary and Joseph were amazed at what he said about their child.

In the temple at the same time was a prophetess also, Anna. She was a widow, eighty-four years old, worshiping God in the temple day and night. She came by just at that moment and gave thanks to God and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro)**

What part of Jesus’ life with Mary and Joseph is especially meaningful for you?

How have the relationships in your family or chosen family deepened during difficult times? – as well as during good times?

How has this Christmas season been for you? What has surprised you? What have you missed?

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

**SHARING (Judy Sholes)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you have reflected upon our reading and music. 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 11:22.]

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

**COMMUNITY PRAYERS (Maryann Dolan, Reggie Ott)**

In 1849, with news of revolution in Europe and the United States’ war with Mexico fresh in his mind, a Unitarian minister in Massachusetts named Edmund Sears wrote a Christmas hymn not about Bethlehem but about his own time and place. Let us begin our Community Prayers today with his prayer for “peace on the earth, good will to all.”

**It Came Upon a Midnight Clear** **(Reggie)**

It came upon a midnight clear,  
That glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near the earth,  
To touch their harps of gold:  
“Peace on the earth, goodwill to all,   
From heaven’s all-gracious King.”  
The world in solemn stillness lay,  
To hear the angels sing.

For lo!, the days are hastening on,  
By prophet bards foretold,  
When with the ever-circling years  
Comes round the age of gold  
When peace shall over all the earth  
Its ancient splendors fling,  
And the whole world give back the song  
Which now the angels sing.

So we pray for peace and we pray with hope. We have other prayers, too. Our response will be: Holy One, hear our prayer.

God within us, may we like Mary ponder the many ways Jesus grows in us. For this we pray.

God beside us, may we like Joseph protect those who are vulnerable and marginalized. For this we pray.

God beyond us, may we like Simeon see your salvation in the lives of the people we meet. For this we pray.

God of abundance, may we like Anna give thanks for the ways you show yourself to us and for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious whose faithfulness brings your gospel into the world. For this we pray.

God among us, may we honor all the different kinds of families that embody love. And may we bring our best selves into the families that are home to us. For this we pray.

For what else shall we pray?

[Shared prayers] When prayers become less frequent –Would anyone else like to offer a prayer? [Short 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 (Maryann Dolan, Marilyn and Paul Voigt)**

**Maryann:** Holy One, we offer you ourselves, as we are. We feel a thrill of hope to realize that you offer yourself to us, as we are. In gratitude, we dedicate ourselves to your law of love and your gospel of peace. And so we sing:

**O Holy Night** – **Marilyn and Paul Voigt**

1. O holy night, the stars are brightly shining,  
It is the night of the dear Saviour’s birth;  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
'Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope the weary world[**1**](https://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/o_holy_night.htm#Note01) rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;

*Chorus*Fall on your knees, Oh hear the angel voices!  
O night divine! O night when Christ was born.  
O night, O holy night, O night divine.

2. Truly He taught us to love one another;  
His law is Love and His gospel is Peace;  
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,  
And in his name all oppression shall cease,  
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful Chorus raise we;  
Let all within us praise his Holy name!

*Chorus*Christ is the Lord, then ever! ever praise we![**3**](https://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/o_holy_night.htm#Note 3a)  
His pow'r and glory, evermore proclaim!  
His pow'r and glory, evermore proclaim!

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Peg Duchesne)**

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 (Kathy Heller)**

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.

**BLESSING**  (From Col 3:12-17 ) **(Betty Thompson)**

Put on, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved,  
heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,  
bearing with one another and forgiving one another.  
And over all these put on love,   
that is, the bond of perfection.  
And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,   
the peace into which you were also called in one body.  
And be thankful.  
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

**CLOSING MUSIC: Angels We Have Heard on High**  **(SJB 10:30 Band)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9x6vmNdSe0&feature=youtu.be>

Angels we have heard on high  
Sweetly singing o’er the plains  
And the mountains in reply  
Echoing their joyous strains

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be  
Which inspire your heavenly song?

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem and see  
Him Whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee,  
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

**SOURCES:**

* Image of the Holy Family: Bread for the World Christmas card (thank you, Mary Julia Bailey) <https://secure.bread.org/site/Ecommerce/1178265516?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=1221&store_id=1101&s_src=SALE&s_subsrc=sojoprint>
* Image - small part of a Mark Rothko painting - <https://asiasociety.org/hong-kong/events/pollock-rothko-and-still-titans-abstract-expressionism>