**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, February 7, 2021**

*“See what God sees; hear what God hears.” – Richard Rohr*

**CHECK-IN** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Betty Thompson/Suzie De Quattro)**

**WELCOME (Suzie/Betty)**

 Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Black Books – We will be mailing the Saginaw Diocese Little Black Books for Lent to the people whose addresses we have from our Advent books. If you didn’t get an Advent book and want a Lenten book, please email us with your address. Everybody nearby, expect an email this week about how to pick it up from Suzie.
* Thanks to Judy Sholes and Maryann Dolan for preparing today’s communal prayer.
* We thank Linda Donaldson and Reggie Ott for leading our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Candy Fernandes, Lynn Bufka, Kathleen Heller, Richard McGinnis, Joan and Stu Sklamm, Marilyn Voigt, Sr. Grace Hartzog, and Kate Monagan.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.
* Now ( ) will help us move from getting here to being here.

**SETTLING IN (Suzie/Betty)**

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 incarnated in you.

Now Linda Donaldson will lead us into our prayer together with the opening song “Amazing Grace.”

**OPENING SONG** **Amazing Grace (Linda Donaldson)**

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun.

**GREETING (Judy Sholes)**

Beloved Community, rejoice!

**All:** And all God’s people reply: Amen! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP**  **(Judy)**

We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as the people of God and the body of Christ.  We gather to celebrate the great fact that God is in love with us. We are confident that God will act in us and through us. We believe that God will give us light for our next step. We are in a tumultuous time with hope and uncertainty ahead but we trust that if we listen, we will hear God’s call as we continue our journey. And so let us pray.

**GATHERING PRAYER** **(Judy)**

God of love, teach us how to be your community. Help us to see with your eyes and to hear with your ears so we might understand the needs of others and better serve them. May we inquire, nudge, and challenge each other to recognize what is ours to do in the world.

Amen.

Now Maryann Dolan will introduce today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Maryann Dolan)**

Today’s readings begin with the age-old question of suffering and a loving God who listens. The readings then challenge us to really see suffering as God does, and respond. In the first reading, Job, an innocent man, is complaining to God because of the unending suffering he has been forced to endure. He cries out to God in bitterness and accuses God of not caring that his life is a drudgery. Job’s confrontation with God raises questions about human suffering and why an all- powerful God would allow good people to suffer. In this short reading, Job encounters the living God with anger, and God listens.

In Mark’s gospel, Jesus begins his ministry by healing Peter’s mother-in-law who is sick with a fever. He takes her hand, helps her up, the fever disappears, and she immediately begins to serve them. Thus, her encounter with God led her into service. Jesus, then, continued throughout the day to heal the sick and drive out demons. After spending time in prayer, he surprised his disciples when he decided not to remain in Capernaum, where he was readily accepted, but instead to go throughout all of Galilee, to other towns and synagogues that could prove to be more challenging for him.

The third reading is an edited version of a recent daily posting of Fr. Richard Rohr. In it, we learn that in order to truly understand…and feel…the suffering and needs of people…we need to see with God’s eyes and hear with God’s ears. Doing this would allow us to become Christ in the world as we recognize Christ in others.

Now Candy Fernandes will read from the first chapter of the Book of Job. After each of the three readings, Lynn Bufka will read questions for silent reflection. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1** [Job 7:1-4, 6-7](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/mark/1?14)  **(Candy Fernandes)**

Job spoke, saying:
Is not man’s life on earth a drudgery?
    Are not his days those of hirelings?
He is a slave who longs for the shade,
    a hireling who waits for his wages.
So I have been assigned months of misery,
    and troubled nights have been allotted to me.
If in bed I say, “When shall I arise?”
    then the night drags on;
    I am filled with restlessness until the dawn.
My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle;
    they come to an end without hope.
Remember that my life is like the wind;
    I shall not see happiness again.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Lynn Bufka )**

When have you felt angry with God, and what did you do with that feeling?

How do you act in times of pain and suffering? Do you respond with blame, endurance, seeking help, or some other way?

What lament do you raise with God today?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Judy – time and chime) (Betty – slide)**

**Judy**:Now Kathleen Heller will read verses 29-39 of the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark.

**READING 2 (Kathleen Heller)**

On leaving the synagogue
Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.
Simon’s mother-in-law lay sick with a fever.
They immediately told him about her.
He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up.
Then the fever left her and she waited on them.

When it was evening, after sunset,
they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons.
The whole town was gathered at the door.
He cured many who were sick with various diseases,
and he drove out many demons,
not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

Rising very early before dawn, he left
and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.
Simon and those who were with him pursued him
and on finding him said, “Everyone is looking for you.”
He told them, “Let us go on to the nearby villages
that I may preach there also.
For this purpose have I come.”
So he went into their synagogues,
preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Lynn Bufka)**

Jesus always went off to pray by himself prior to events in his life. How has quiet prayer helped you with a decision or something you have faced?

Mark tells us Jesus “moved on.” In your relationships and life situations, when have you “stayed put“ in comfort or discomfort?

 **SILENT REFLECTION** **(Judy – time and chime) (Betty – slide)**

 **READING 3 – Excerpt from a reflection by Fr. Richard Rohr (Judy)**

The soul that is united with God sees the world with God’s eyes. That soul, like God, sees what otherwise is rendered invisible and irrelevant. It hears the whimpering of starving children and does not let itself be diverted from real misery, becoming one with God in perceiving and understanding as well as in acting. The mystical eye sees God at work: seeing, hearing, acting, even in forms that are utterly secular. It is a mysticism of wide-open eyes.

God calls upon the soul to give away its own ears and eyes and to let itself be given those of God. Only they who hear with other ears can speak with the mouth of God. Who other than God sees the poor and hears their cry? To use “God’s senses” does not mean simply turning inward but becoming free for a different way of living life: See what God sees! Hear what God hears! Laugh where God laughs! Cry where God cries!

Allowing God to fully inhabit our senses does not mean we close ourselves off from the world; rather, we open ourselves more fully to it. We are free to be fully ourselves but not to exist only for ourselves. We are free to become Christ in the world to the same extent that we recognize the Christ in others, especially the last and the least.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Lynn Bufka)**

How do you see God? How does God see you?

 How do we deepen our understanding of the compassion of God? In what ordinary ways can we be Christ for one another?

**REFLECTION** **(Judy – time and chime)  (Betty – slide)**

(Judy ) And now Richard McGinniswill lead us in sharing our personal reflections

**SHARING TIME (Richard McGinnis )**

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 11:20.]

Thank you.

Now Stu and Joan Sklamm will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY(Stu and Joan Sklamm)**

We have just listened to God’s word – in scripture, in our reflections, and in our hearts and minds. Let’s pause in silence so we can each answer this question:

What is the longing of my heart at this moment – for myself, for my community, for people who are vulnerable? [Pause….]

As we offer our prayers, our response will be: Loving God, hear our prayer.

* That the vaccine will be made available for all those suffering from the effects of the pandemic, especially those in exile, under oppression, and in severe poverty… let us pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.
* For those suffering from climate warming, that their cry for the earth and survival be heard, let us pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.
* That we all open our hearts and ears to listen to those with opposing views so that we can begin to better understand each other as a first step toward unity, let us pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.
* That we might follow the example of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and all sisters who show us how to reach out to all those in need, let us pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.
* That our political leaders work toward overcoming divisiveness by practicing collegiality and the willingness to compromise for the good of the country, let us pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.
* On this, the first Sunday of Black History Month, may we keep our eyes and ears open to the cries of all people of color and work toward a world where they experience the dignity, respect, and the justice they deserve as fellow human beings, let us pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.

For what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute yourself afterwards.

[Shared prayers]

O Great Love, we place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your care, and we entrust the outcome to you. As we do, we use the words of Bishop Ken Untener: “This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities…. We are prophets of a future not our own.” Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Marilyn Voigt)**

Often, through our shared reflections, we discern a call to take some kind of action.

Let us now take time to name within ourselves something we will offer to others this week in recognition of all that we have received from God. [Pause.]

In thanksgiving for the presence and power of Jesus Christ, and in unity with the Holy Spirit, let us pray. God of abundance, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so we that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Grace Hartzog)**

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 and among 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 in our world. [Pause.]

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

May we nourish others with your presence. Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Kate Monagan)**

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 your 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 (Maryann Dolan)**

In honor of Black History Month, we are using the words of John Lewis as our blessing this morning. After each affirmation of love, let the church say Amen.

"Know that the truth always leads to love and the perpetuation of peace.” (Amen!)

“Clothe yourself in the work of love; hold only love, only peace in your heart.“ (Amen!)

“Anchor the eternity of love in your own soul and embed this planet with goodness.” (Amen!)

And now Reggie Ott will lead us in our closing song Rain Down by Jaime Cortez.

**CLOSING SONG (Reggie Ott)**

Rain down, Rain down, Rain down your love on your people.
Rain down, Rain down, Rain down your love, God of life.

Verse 1: Faithful and true is the Word of our God.

All of God's works are so worthy of trust.
God's mercy falls on the just and the right.
Full of God's love is the earth. Refrain

Verse 2: We who revere and find hope in our God

Live in the kindness and joy of God's wing.
God will protect us from darkness and death.
God will not leave us to starve. Refrain

Verse 3: God of creation, we long for your truth.

You are the water of life that we thirst.
Grant that Your love and your peace touch our hearts.
All of our hope lies in You. Refrain

**RESOURCES**

Mary McGlone’s commentary on the 5th Sunday of Ordinary Time, NCR www.**ncr**online.org/columns/sunday-resources

Richard Rohr’s Daily reflection, 15 January 2021 Center for Action and Contemplation <meditations@cac.org

Roger Karban’ commentary for the 5th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Archived article Articles,fosilonline.com

Philosophy of John Lewis with Brenda Jones, *Across That Bridge: A Vision for Change and the* *Future of America* (Hatchette Books: 2 017,