**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, July 18, 2021**

**Jesus is our peace. (Ephesians 2:13)**

**CHECK-IN** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Lynn Bufka)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Lynn and Norb Bufka who prepared this communal prayer.
* Thanks to Linda Donaldson for our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Bill and Kathy Cavanaugh, George Fulk, Kathy Linaberry, Debbie Ballard, Gail DeGeorge, Bob Gallagher, Ann Jelen, Mary Ott, Anne Regan and Bill Fanelli.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Lynn Bufka)**

Let your breath bring you into quiet so you can be attentive to each other and to the Spirit who is working in each of us. Notice your breath as it goes in and out…. Let it slow and deepen… and slowly fill you with the peace of Christ. We begin with 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together… and one to know the Spirit who never leaves us.

Now Linda Donaldson will lead us into our celebration.

**OPENING – Shepherd Me O God (Linda Donaldson)**

Shepherd me O God by Marty Haugen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFgZGlZ5t80>

Refrain:

Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

God is my shepherd, so nothing shall I want, I rest in the meadows of faithfulness and love, I walk by the quiet waters of peace.

Gently you raise me and heal my weary soul, you lead me by pathways of righteousness and truth, my spirit shall sing the music of your name.

You have set me a banquet of love in the face of hatred, crowning me with love beyond my pow’r to hold.

**GREETING (Gail DeGeorge)**

Beloved Community, rejoice!The Spirit of Christ is alive in us! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**All:** Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Gail DeGeorge)**

We remember how the Spirit of our loving God poured into the disciples and enabled them to share the good news in ways that **everyone** could understand, across all divisions. Today we hope for the same experience: for inner tranquility to overcome divisions. We believe that the Spirit will give us light for our next step. And now let us pray.

**GATHERING PRAYER (Mary Ott)**

Spirit of the Living God,

teach us how to be your community –

to see one another with your eyes of love,

to break down divisions, to find grace in disruptions,

to cultivate peace within ourselves to share with the world.

Let us live in the peace of Jesus and share that peace with each other.

Amen.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Kathy Linaberry)**

St. Paul’s letter addresses two groups in Ephesus who “were once far off” from each other – the Jews and the pagans -- who are now making one community in Christ. Paul’s letter is for us, too. He tells us that Jesus is our peace. Not the absence of war kind of peace but rather, the peace we can find in Jesus is an attitude of inner tranquility. It’s through that inner tranquility that we can then find peace, and perhaps grace, to carry us through personal troubles, both large and small. And once we find that inner tranquility, we are called to break down divisions, and to establish peace.

In the Gospel, Jesus had sent the disciples off to the towns and villages, and now they are back, telling him all about it. He takes them away in a boat, perhaps to find peace from the crowds. Yet the crowds find them. Their plan for peace was disrupted yet it was in the disruption that many people then found connection with Jesus. We too try to make plans that get disrupted: daily routines and activities, vacations, education for the kids, career moves, retirement, and more. Often events occur which disrupt our plans, such as sickness, an accident, a pandemic, addiction, loss of a job, economic downturns, and death of a loved one.

Jesus teaches us in today’s Gospel to accept unplanned events as graced moments and look for

the presence of God in them, which will bring peace to our hearts.

*(Slight pause)*

Now George Fulk will read chapter 2:13-18 of the Letter to the Ephesians, followed by questions and silence for reflection. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1**  **(George Fulk)**

Brothers and sisters:  
In Christ Jesus you who once were far off  
have become near by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, he who made both one  
and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh,  
abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims,  
that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two,  
thus establishing peace,  
and might reconcile both with God,  
in one body, through the cross,  
putting that enmity to death by it.   
He came and preached peace to you who were far off  
and peace to those who were near,  
for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

**QUESTIONS 1 (Bob Gallagher)**

What inner divisions keep you from being “one new person”? What inner walls separate you from others?

How can you be an instrument of Jesus’ peace in our world?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Share slide 1, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Lynn Bufka: Now Debbie Ballard will read from the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 6:30-34, followed by questions and silence for reflection. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls.

**READING 2 (Debbie Ballard)**

The apostles gathered together with Jesus  
and reported all they had done and taught.   
He said to them,  
“Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.”   
People were coming and going in great numbers,  
and they had no opportunity even to eat.   
So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place.   
People saw them leaving and many came to know about it.   
They hastened there on foot from all the towns  
and arrived at the place before them.

When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd,  
his heart was moved with pity for them,  
for they were like sheep without a shepherd;  
and he began to teach them many things.

*(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 2 (Bob Gallagher)**

How did the disciples feel when they arrived at the deserted place and found a crowd? And when you seek a quiet place or time, how do you respond when someone or something crowds you?

Women religious and many others set aside time for an annual retreat. Do you try to find time for quiet? Where is your “deserted place” where you can “rest a while”?”

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**  **(Betty:** Share slide 2, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Lynn Bufka: Now Kathy Cavanaugh will read an excerpt from Bishop Untener’s Homily, originally given on July 20, 2003, followed by questions and silence for reflection. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls to you.

**READING 3 (Kathy Cavanaugh)**

One of the striking things about this Gospel passage is that we see Jesus dealing with an unplanned event. He and his disciples had planned a couple of quiet days together in a deserted place. They probably got three or four days worth of food, put it in the boat, and happily sailed off. But when they arrive, a crowd is there waiting for them.

…That set me thinking. I wonder what percentage of our lives is made up of unplanned events.

… I took a look at Mark's Gospel to see how much of Jesus' life was planned, and how much was unplanned.….He couldn't, as a human being, fast forward the tape and look ahead to see what was going to happen. Which means that from time to time he was surprised, happy, angry, moved to tears. As a human being, Jesus wasn't able to plan everything in his life any more than we are.

….

Almost all of his cures were unplanned.

…. There were also disputes with the Pharisees and other religious leaders. These were unplanned.

…. And finally, his arrest, trial, crucifixion and death. This wasn't something that Jesus himself, as a human being, designed. He clearly saw storm clouds brewing as his disputes with the religious leaders increased, but the arrest and death happened suddenly - all in about 18 hours.

….

Most of the events in the life of Jesus, as described in the Gospel, were unplanned events.

Perhaps we can learn something from Jesus. When you look at those unplanned moments in his life, you see that they turned out to be graced moments. He ends up curing sick people he didn't have on his agenda that day. He feeds hungry people. He cures a pagan woman's daughter. He calms an unexpected storm.

Even his terrible death turned out to be a graced moment. He managed to trust the Father, and entrust himself to the Father, and the result was the glorious resurrection - for him and for us.

I think I have to change my attitude toward the unplanned things that break in on my life - things that are not only unplanned, but which interfere with the plans I had. A large number of the unplanned events in our lives aren't easy, or even pleasant. Maybe I should try to see it as a graced moment, a time when the Lord makes himself especially present to help me do something very, very good. It may be small, but still, something very good. The Lord can take anything and make it produce goodness.

*(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 3 (Bob Gallagher)**

Think of an unplanned event in your life. (long pause) How could you have acted differently or noticed grace?

How can you prepare yourself to handle future unplanned events as graced moments?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**  **(Betty:** Share slide 3, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Lynn Bufka: Anne Regan will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Anne Regan)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings. That helps us to glimpse the many ways God is among us. We welcome new voices, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

*[If it feels needed or you’d like to include this:* As you share your feelings, please use "I” or “me". And let's leave a breath of silence between speakers. A bridge of silence allows us to take in what was just said and let it influence what we may want to share.]

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

Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute again afterwards.

Who would like to begin our sharing?

(Sharing)

Thank you.

Ann Jelen will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Ann Jelen)**

We know that God alone is enough for us. At the same time, we have heard Paul say that “if there is anything you need, pray for it.” So now we bring what is in our hearts to God. Our response will be: God of peace, hear our prayer.

When we experience disruption or our plans fall apart, help us find the grace in those times to be the peace of Jesus. For this we pray. God of peace, hear our prayer.

God among us, animate the Leadership Conference of Women Religious as they ask not simply what they are to do for your kingdom, but how they are to be your peace. For this we pray. God of peace, hear our prayer.

Guide us in our summer fun so that we remember our connection with you and each other and do not allow divisions to intrude. For this we pray. God of peace, hear our prayer.

Now let’s remember the feelings and prayers that arose in us as we shared reflections, and also the prayers we carry with us. *[Pause.]*

Now, for what else shall we pray? Please remember to unmute and mute yourself.

(People speak.) God of peace, hear our prayer.

Thank you.

O God, we give you all our prayers, spoken and unspoken. We pray as Norb’s father prayed after every meal- Let us pray for peace, peace in our hearts, peace in our homes, peace in our communities, peace in our world. May that inner tranquility allow us to accept disruptions, to break down divisions, to be your presence. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Bill Fanelli)**

In these months after Pentecost, we celebrate the amazing fact that the Spirit of God lives in us now and at every moment. What does it mean to offer yourself to God in gratitude? Is there an old or new call that you will commit to this week? *[Pause.]*

Let us pray. Generous God, Creative Spirit, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Bill Cavanaugh)**

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

and said, “… as I have done for you, you should also do.”

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.

Norb Bufka will now lead us in praying the Lord’s prayer.

**OUR FATHER (Norb Bufka)**

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 (Betty Thompson)**

Broken, we have gathered. Nourished, we reach out.

Let us now go forth in peace:

in communion with each other

and offering communion to a hungry world. Amen.

Now Linda Donaldson will lead us in singing “Let There Be Peace on Earth.”

**CLOSING – LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH (Linda Donaldson)**

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86\_4BesaOVc**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86_4BesaOVc)

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.

With God as our Mother, family all are we.

Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me; let this be the moment now.

With ev’ry step I take, let this be my solemn vow;

To take each moment, and live each moment in peace eternally!

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

**RESOURCES**

**Third reading Source:** <http://www.visitationnorth.org/index.php/year-b-mark/65-sixteenth-sunday-in-ordinary-time-year-b>