**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer, November 7, 2021**

**32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*Who are the “People of God”?*

**HELLOs** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME  (Betty )**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Sister Jennie Lechtenberg and Sister Jo’Ann De Quattro, with help from Sister Marie McCarthy, who prepared this Sunday.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today:

Bill Fanelli, George Urban, Anne Regan, Lynn Bufka, Peg Duchesne, Pat Campbell, Linda Donaldson, Greg Campbell, Debbie Ballard, Jennie Lechtenberg and Jo’Ann De Quattro.

* Thanks to all of you for sharing names of loved ones who have gone before us into the fullness of God. We will pray with some names each week and Terri Butel is creating a way for us to share all names together.

**SETTLING IN** Adapted from ‘Breathing with Intention’ by Kathleen Pruitt, CSJP **(Jo’Ann)**

Close your eyes and focus on a sound – traffic, a dog barking, music, laughter, rain - any sound. Breathe. Focus. Drop away other thoughts. Listen. Breathe. Listen. Let the sound become silence. Feel your body relax. Listen with the ear of your heart. Take three deep breaths. One to be here…One to be together…and another to open our hearts to the Spirit in our midst.

 *(Pause)*

**GREETING / CALL TO WORSHIP (Jo’Ann)**

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

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

**OPENING SONG: “**Gather Us In” by Marty Haugen **3:23 minutes (Betty)**

 [**https://youtu.be/ar0BXa82F9M**](https://youtu.be/ar0BXa82F9M)Start at 20 seconds.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME  (Jennie Lechtenberg)**

From our Opening Song, ‘Gather Us In’, we are reminded that God calls us to be community, to be church, to be the People of God. We are a microcosm of our world, its diversity, its complexity, its simplicity. In our readings for today, we also hear how Jesus both praises and chastises.

Both readings tell stories of women who are widows. You may be a widow. You may have been the child of a widow. Think of widows you know/have known. Try to put yourself in their position

Let us listen to God’s word as spoken in the Hebrew Scripture and in today’s Gospel.

*(Slight pause)*

**Jennie:** Now **Bill Fanelli** will read from the 1st Book of Kings.

Then **Greg Campbell** will offer questions and silence for reflection.

Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1: 1 Kings 17:10-16** **(Bill Fanelli)**

In those days, Elijah the prophet went to Zarephath.
Arriving at the entrance of the city, Elijah called out to a woman, a widow, who was gathering sticks: "Please bring me a small cupful of water to drink."
She left to get it, and Elijah called out after her, "Please bring along a bit of bread."
She answered, "As your God lives, I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar, and a little oil in my jug. Just now I was collecting a couple of sticks,
to go in and prepare something for myself and my son;
when we have eaten it, we shall die."
Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid. Go and do as you propose.
But first make me a little cake and bring it to me.
Then you can prepare something for yourself and your son.
For the God of Israel says, 'The “The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry,
until the day when the Creator God sends rain upon the earth.'"
The woman, a widow, left and did as Elijah had said.
She was able to eat for a year, and her son as well;
the jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry,
as the Creator had foretold through Elijah.

 *(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 1** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Greg Campbell)**

When have you hesitated because you felt that you didn’t have ‘enough’ to make a difference? How did you feel?

What graces did you discover that let your ‘not enough’ become ‘enough and more’?

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

**READING 2**:  Mark 12: 38-44 **(George Urban)**

In the course of teaching, Jesus said to the crowds:
"Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes
and accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in synagogues,
and places of honor at banquets.
They devour the houses of widows, and recite lengthy prayers.
They will receive a very severe condemnation."

He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums.
A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents.
Calling the disciples Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood." *(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 2** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Greg Campbell)**

What would it be like if you threw your lot in as fully as the widow?

How would that make you different?

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

Betty: Now **Anne Regan** will share a reflection adapted From Catholic Women Preach by Phyllis Zagano, PhD.

**READING 3:** (**Anne Regan** **)**

Let’s go back to today’s Gospel. If Jesus was warning us about the scribes—the teachers of the law--what was Jesus saying about clericalism?

First Mark starts with a warning about those scribes who took “seats of honor in synagogues and places of honor at banquets.”

Somebody let those scribes sit up front deciding they were the most important in the community.

Somebody ignored all sorts of biblical teaching to say the law, its representatives and its enforcers were the most important.

And Jesus was not happy about it. Is there a message here about what a focus on law and clerical authority might do to a community? (slight pause)

Then we hear about the widow.

Mark tells us that, after speaking about the scribes, Jesus sat down opposite the “treasury”—the ancient collection box—watching some people put in a lot of money. Then a poor widow came forward and put in two coins - all she had.

What is the connection among these three different sets of people: the scribes, the rich donors, and the poor widow? Why should we admire the poor widow more than those with professional status or money?

Quite simply, the widow has no one to depend upon but God. And she is not putting her coins into the treasury to show her importance or to buy celestial insurance. She is putting her share into the treasury because she belongs to the group, because she is part of the people of God.

This doesn’t mean you need to give away your last nickel. It does mean that you do not need to be a cleric or a big donor to matter in the people of God. No matter how you participate in church, you are a full member. You *are* the people of God….

And, like the widow, it’s up to you to listen to the Spirit and know what it means for you to be part of the people of God. To discern what it means to be “all in.”

The reading also suggests that Church leaders might question their assumptions about what it means to be “all in” as members of the people of God. There are always “special people” in every group. But the Church, our Church, is supposed to be different. It is supposed to be about communion and community and Gospel; it’s not supposed to be about clerics. The difference with Church, I think, is that the leaders must continually learn from the members, and the members share responsibility for the life of the church. The hierarchy, from deacons to the pope, is only one, numerically small, part of the people of God.

We all belong and we always have.... And that will be true tomorrow, and the next day, and the next. We are all equal members of the Church. *(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 3** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Greg Campbell)**

In light of this reflection -- Who are the people of God? Who are Church? Who are God’s beloved?

How are you “all in” for the people of God?

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

(Betty) **Lynn Bufka** will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING  (Lynn Bufka)**

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,

And let’s remember to leave a bridge of silence between speakers.

Now we begin in silence as we gather our reflections.  *[Long pause.]*

Who would like to begin our sharing? Please unmute yourself to speak.

(Sharing)

Thank you.

Now Debbie Ballard will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Debbie Ballard)**

Sit with all that has been shared this morning, and notice what prayer is rising in you. (Long-ish pause)

We know that God alone is enough for us. Now we bring what is in our hearts to God. Our response will be, **“Holy One, hear our prayer.”**

Loving God, give us the grace to share our time and treasure with those who are in need: widows and orphans, people who suffer from physical and mental illness, “For this we pray.” **“Holy One, hear our prayer.”**

Loving God, help us to hear and respond to the needs of people who suffer the effects of climate change: floods, fires, and other natural disasters – especially the people of Haiti. “For this we pray.” **“Holy One, hear our prayer.”**

Loving God, strengthen the resolve of the members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Recreate them for Your purpose at this moment in time, “For this we pray.” **“Holy One, hear our prayer.”**

Loving God, heal the divisions in our families, in our country, in our world. Help us to bring about your beloved community wherever we are, “For this we pray.” **“Holy One, hear our prayer.”**

Now, for what else shall we pray? Please remember to unmute yourself and end your prayer with “For this we pray.” Who would like to begin?

(People speak.)  “Holy One, hear our prayer.”

O God, we give you all our prayers, spoken and unspoken.  We will do all that we can to put our prayers into action – while entrusting the outcome to you. Blessed be.

*(Slight pause)*

**OFFERTORY (Peg Duchesne)**

We celebrate the amazing fact that the Holy One is with us and lives in us now and at every moment. So we offer ourselves to God in gratitude for having been chosen, just as we are, to be God’s Living Sign in our world. What special call will I live out during the coming week? *(Pause.)*

In November, we are especially aware that those who have gone before us are still our companions, in the communion of saints. They help us and we help them to go as God calls us. We name some of those from our Book of Life who entered God’s full embrace during the past year:

 William Lake, husband of Paula,

Joan McCaffrey Spenser, mother of Kathleen Cross,

Deborah Brown Keelan, Sister of Tim Brown,

Jeanne Coniaris Rosenblatt, aunt of Rich McGinnis,

Jack Kurtz, High school classmate of Mia Brown,

Jean Leever, friend of Barb Shaklan,

Bill and Sid Hetzler, cousins of Ann Jelen,

Fr. Tony Krisak (pronounced KREE sack), friend of Judy Sholes,

Mary Ann Young, friend of Mary Ott and others,

Adelberto Claros, friend of Mary Ott,

Sr. Vincentia Joseph, friend of Linda Donaldson.

Angelo Joachin, Jr., friend of Kathleen Cross,

Marilyn Nickels, friend of Mary Ott, the Thompsons and others

We remember these Beloveds and all whom we hold in our hearts, grateful for the gift of their lives which continue to bless us.

Let us pray: Generous God, Creative Spirit, we accept our responsibility in the communion of saints. We commit to share our time, our talents and our treasures so that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus the Christ. Blessed be.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Pat Campbell)**

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, “… **Do** **THIS in memory of me**.”

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

gifts of **Earth**, and the 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. Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here. May we nourish others as you nourish us. Blessed be.

**OUR FATHER, OUR MOTHER                                (Linda Donaldson)**

Now let us join our hearts to pray with all who seek peace and justice throughout the world, in the words of the Polynesian and Maori people and the New Zealand Anglican community:

Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Mother and Father of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world;
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trial too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Blessed be.

**FINAL BLESSING Adapted from ‘A Blessing’ by Mary Medved, SNJM, RIP (Jo’Ann De Quattro)**

Blessed be the longing that brought you here & quickens your soul with wonder.

May you have the courage to befriend your eternal longing.

May you enjoy the critical and creative companionship of the question:

 “Who am I becoming?” and may it brighten your longing.

May a secret providence guide your thoughts and shelter your feelings.

May the sense of something absent enlarge your life.

May your soul be as free as the ever-new waves of the sea.

May you succumb to the danger of growth.

May you live in the neighborhood of wonder.

May you belong to love with the wildness of dance.

May you know that you are ever-embraced in the kind circle of God.

And may you find something to delight in each day!

**CLOSING SONG:  “**Let Us Give Thanks for Unknown Blessings” by Carol Browning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soYQmgVnXEw> (1.25 speed.)

**Refrain:** Let us give thanks for unknown blessings already on the way.

Let us give thanks for unknown blessings already on the way.

God holds the future, the present, and the past.

So, let us give thanks for unknown blessings already on the way.

See the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap

Yet our God will give them food to eat

And God will care for us. **Refrain:**

Lilies of the field, they neither toil nor spin

As they are clothed in glorious light.

God gives us what we need. **Refrain:**

Do not fear or fret.

Our lives are in God’s hands.

So praise and thanks should be our song

To God our hope, our home. **Refrain:**

Let us give thanks for unknown blessings already on the way.

Already on the way. On the way.

**RESOURCES**

Reflection: Phyllis Zagano, <https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/11072021>

Kathleen Pruitt, CSJP: ‘Breathing With Intention’ published in LCWR Occasional Papers – Summer 2021.