**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**April 3, 2022, the Fifth Sunday of Lent**

*“Now is the acceptable time. Now is the day of salvation!*

*Become an ambassador for Christ.”*

*(2 Corinthians 6:2, 5:20)*



Christ at Rest https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-IopsxV3nMi4/VtdTp11YddI/AAAAAAAAB30/XQK5B\_stFrs/s640/Christ\_at\_Rest%252C\_by\_Hans\_Holbein\_the\_Younger.jpg

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

**WELCOME (Richard McGinnis)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* I (Richard McGinnis) prepared our prayer for today.
* Thanks to Debra Street and Marilyn Voight for leading our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Tim Brown, Kate Monagan, Karen McCarthy, Judy Sholes, Maryann Dolan, Mary Dolmage, Cecilia Estrada, Sister Jennie Lechtenburg, Sister Jo’Ann De Quattro, Rose Marie Smith, and Mia Brown.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please put a note in Chat or email later.

**SETTLING IN (Richard)**

Let’s move from greeting each other to allowing our hearts to become still to prepare for the coming of God. Settle into a comfortable position. Notice your breath as it goes in and out. Let it slow and deepen and fill you with the peace of Christ.

We begin with 3 deep breaths.

One to be here….

one to be together….

and one to make space for the Spirit.

Now Tim Brown and Debra Street will lead us into our prayer.

**OPENING RITUAL** **(Tim Brown and Debra Street)**

Tim: Beloved Community, Lent calls us to become Ambassadors of God.

All: O God who does not condemn, we hear you calling.

Tim: Beloved Community, we begin just where we are.

All: O God who does not condemn, we hear you calling.

Tim: Holy One, you appeal to us for justice, peace, and communion for your Body!

All: O God who does not condemn, we hear you calling.

Tim: “Lent is a call to weep for what we could have been and are not. Lent is the grace to grieve for what we should have done and did not. Lent is the opportunity to change what we ought to change but have not……..Lent is about becoming, doing and changing whatever it is that is blocking the fullness of life in us right now.” (Joan Chittister, OSB)

How we remove these blockages can change both us and the world. Let the words of Paul echo in us!:

We implore you in Christ’s name: know that you are a friend of God!. . . This is the acceptable time! This is the day of salvation! We beg you not to receive this grace of God in vain.

Let us pause and reflect on what is hindering us making this the acceptable time, and this the day of salvation. [*Pause – about 2 slow deep breaths.]*

Tim: Let us pray together:

Tim (and all, muted):

I ask you, my sisters and brothers, to pray for me to our God.

Holy One, accept my deep sorrow for ways in which I participate in the brokenness of your world -- in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and what I have failed to do.

Thank you for your endless love for me, and for your forgiveness that comes even before I ask.

Strengthen me to take an active part in bringing your grace to the world, in the company of all your children, all the saints, and all the Earth. Amen.

(**Debra)** (and all, muted): Let’s state this intention in song.

Sent by our God am I.

My hands are ready now

to make the earth a place

in which your Kin-dom comes. (repeat)

The angels cannot change

A world of hurt and pain

Into a world of love,

Of justice and of peace.

The task is mine to do,

To set it really free,

So help me to obey,

Help me to do your will!

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME**  **(Richard McGinnis)**

As I prepared today’s communal prayer, I thought of the many ways in which I have fallen short. Some of the instances occurred long ago, but I still recall them. It seems that I have not let them go completely. Meanwhile, on the news, there were reports of the bombing of Ukrainian cities and of the death of civilians. I wondered how I would accept it if one of my loved ones were killed, wounded, or running for their lives. Would forgiveness triumph over sorrow and anger?

The way of the cross calls you and me to a new way of being. “The Irish Jesuit, Blessed John Sullivan, urged participants in a retreat to ‘Be always beginning. Let the past go. The saints were always beginning. That is how they became saints.’”

Success is not achieved by holding on to the past, or by placing our trust in things, or, in what will inevitably prove to be a futile effort, by seeking to avoid the experience of suffering in our lives. The voice of divine wisdom that we hear in the readings for today calls us to accept the loss of things...to participate in life notwithstanding the risk of suffering… and to let go of all that impedes the forgiveness of self or the extending of mercy toward others--because trust in Christ above all earthly things and love of others in their agonies as well as their ecstasies is what makes all things new and leads to our uniting with Christ in resurrection.

Before the triumph of the resurrection, Christ surrendered himself to suffering. He suffered for the failings of each one of us--and of those who have sinned against us. He did this out of love for us all so that we might be saved. As Paul declares in his letter to the Philippians, becoming like him is the pathway to resurrection.

*(Slight pause)*

(Richard) Karen McCarthy will read from the Book of Isaiah and the letter of Paul to the Philippians. Then Kate Monagan will offer questions for your reflection, followed by silence. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1**  **(Karen McCarthy)**

[**Is 43:16, 18-**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/isaiah/43?16)**19**

Thus says the our God,...
Remember not the events of the past,
            the things of long ago consider not;
see, I am doing something new!
            Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

**[Phil 3:8-11, 13-14](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/philippians/3?8)**

I consider everything a loss in light of the supreme good of knowing my Savior Jesus Christ, for whose sake I forfeited everything. I count everything else as garbage, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him. My justice does not come from observing the law but through my faith in Christ.… All I want is to know Christ---yes, to know the power of the resurrection and how to share in Christ’s sufferings, becoming like Christ in death, and so, somehow, attaining resurrection from the dead.

..,I do not consider myself to have reached the finish line. I give no thought to what lies behind, but push on to what is ahead. I press on toward the goal - the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **(Kate Monagan)**

How does your past continue to ensnare you?

What allowed your faith to evolve beyond observance of the law--to knowing Christ?

When have you experienced a sense of unity with Christ in your suffering?

**COMMUNAL REFLECTION** (**Betty:** Slide 1, time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

(Richard):Next, Judy Sholes will read to us from the Gospel of John.

**READING 2** [**Jn 8:2-11**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/8?1) **(Judy Sholes)**

Early in the morning, Jesus arrived in the temple area,
and all the people started coming to him,
and he sat down and taught them.
Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman
who had been caught in adultery
and made her stand in the middle.
They said to him,
“Teacher, this woman was caught
in the very act of committing adultery.
Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women.
So what do you say?”

…Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger.
But when they continued asking him,
he straightened up and said to them,
“Let the one among you who is without sin
be the first to throw a stone at her.”

Again he bent down and wrote on the ground.
And in response, they went away one by one,
beginning with the elders.
So he was left alone with the woman before him.
Then Jesus straightened up and said to her,
“Woman, where are they?
Has no one condemned you?”
She replied, “No one, sir.”
Then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you.
Go, and from now on do not sin any more.”

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **(Kate Monagan)**

What kind of price or pain have you experienced as part of the act of forgiving another?

How do you keep a readiness to forgive—even for those who have not asked for it?

**COMMUNAL REFLECTION** (**Betty:** Slide 2, time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

(Richard): Now Maryann Dolan will read an adaptation of a reflection on the Scriptures by Sister Mary M. McGlone, CSJ.

**READING 3 (Maryann Dolan)**

Picture today's passion-filled Gospel scene. It opens when a group of meticulously righteous prigs interrupt Jesus as he is teaching near the Temple.

They think they have designed the perfect no-win situation: Jesus has to choose between contradicting God's law and being an accomplice to stoning their prey, a woman about whom they care no more than fishermen care about the worms they secure to their hooks.

Today’s reading from Isaiah quotes God as saying, "Remember not the events of the past ... see, I am doing something new."

When that crowd of bullies set their stage, they weren't counting on Jesus to represent the God Isaiah described.

How to respond to the mob? Jesus chose gesture and silence. He bent down and using just one finger, he wrote in the dust. What was he teaching with his silent sign?

Whatever Jesus wrote, it indicted every person in the crowd. With all their bravado, no one had another word to say when Jesus invited the sinless one to cast the first stone.

When all was said and done, [in the words of St. Augustine](https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2016/11/21/161121b.html), "the two of them alone remained: mercy with misery."

We know the name of the one Augustine called mercy. In honor of her newly recovered dignity, let us call the other Kalena, a Greek name with roots in words for both beloved and tortured.

The twist in the story is that the bullies unwittingly cemented a unique communion between Jesus and Kalena. Bringing them together as objects of their manipulation, they gave Jesus free rein to do what he did best: invite another into new life. Infuse mercy into misery. Usher Kalena into the realm of grace.

In the end, Kalena is the one who could [say with Paul](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/philippians/3), "I have indeed been taken possession of by Jesus Christ."

Today, we are invited to contemplate Jesus as the embodiment and sign of God who is ever bringing about something new.

As we come to appreciate God’s ways,...we will be drawn to stop dwelling on the past in order to see what grace makes possible.

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **(Kate Monagan)**

How is it different for you to have your errors noted by someone who loves you, than by someone who is hostile toward you?

When has your forgiveness been the source of transformation for you or the person whom you forgave?

**COMMUNAL REFLECTION** (**Betty:** Slide 3. time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

**SHARING (Mary Dolmage)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you have reflected upon our readings 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.

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 for two slow, deep breaths.]*

*[Stop by about 11:20.]*

Thank you.  We have to stop now, but you are welcome to continue sharing after the final song.

Now Cecilia Estrada will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Cecilia Estrada)**

Let’s pause in silence to notice what prayer rises in us now. *[Pause….]*

Our response today will be: “God of forgiving love, hear our prayer.”

Grant that Catholic sisters and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious be filled with your grace as they strive to be agents of your loving presence to those in need around the world. Let us pray.

All (muted): God of forgiving love, hear our prayer.

Grant us the grace—-

to surrender ourselves to you in prayer, deeply and completely;

to let go of the grip that we maintain on those things that make our hearts small;

and to transform us with your boundless love,

so that we are enabled to confront the difficulties that we encounter on our journey with open hearts and serve as faithful instruments of your mercy. Let us pray.

All (muted): God of forgiving love, hear our prayer.

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

(Shared prayers) …Let us pray. All (muted**): God of forgiving love, hear our prayer.**

O You who love us more than we can imagine, we are grateful for this chance to give you our prayers, spoken and unspoken. We entrust the outcome to you. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Sister Jennie Lechtenburg and Marilyn Voight)**

(Jennie) Holy One, we bring you ourselves knowing you accept us just as we are.

(Marilyn, singing twice)

Take, oh take me as I am.

 Summon out what I shall be.

 Set your seal upon my heart,

 and live in me.

(Jennie) In what specific way have I heard your call to me this week? *(Long pause)*

Holy One, we rely on your grace, which we do not take in vain. We will use our time, our talents, and our treasure to work towards being your ambassadors in the world.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Sister Jo’Ann De Quattro)**

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 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 know God within 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.

**HEAVENLY FATHER, HEAVENLY MOTHER (Rose Marie Smith)**

(Rose Marie) Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands to pray in harmony with our family throughout the world:

(Rose Marie) (All others muted):

Heavenly Father, heavenly Mother,

Holy and blessed is your true name.

We pray for your reign of peace to come,

We pray that your good will be done,

Let heaven and earth become one.

Give us this day the bread we need,

Give it to those who have none.

Let forgiveness flow like a river between us,

From each one to each one.

Lead us to holy innocence

Beyond the evil of our days —

Come swiftly Mother, Father, come.

For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy:

Forever your name is All in One.

**FINAL BLESSING (Mia Brown)**

Let us extend our hands in blessing of one another with the following words:

May God grant us the joy promised by Christ!
Not by shielding us from all sorrows and pain,
But by strengthening us to bear it, as it comes;

Not by making our path easy,
But by making us sturdy to travel any path;

Not by taking hardships from us,
But by taking fear from our heart;

Not by granting us unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping our face bright, even in the shadows;

Not by making our life always pleasant,
But by showing us when people and their causes need us most,
and by making us anxious to be there to help.

God’s love, peace, hope and joy be with you for the week ahead.

                                                                   – Author Unknown

**CLOSING SONG—"This Alone” by Tim Manion (Debra)**

Refrain:

One thing I ask, this alone I seek,
To dwell in the House of our God all my days.
For one day within Your temple heals every day alone.
O God, bring me to Your dwelling.

Verses:

1. Hear, O God, the sound of my calling.
Hear, O God, and show me Your way. Repeat refrain.

2. My God is my light and hope of salvation.
My God is my refuge; whom should I fear? Repeat refrain.

3. Wait on our God and hope in God’s mercy.
Wait on our God and live in God’s love. Repeat refrain.

**RESOURCES**

* Opening Ritual – “Lent is a call…” quote from Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister: <http://rosemarieberger.com/2011/03/15/joan-chittister-lent-is-a-chance-to-grieve/>
* Introduction to theme and reflective questions. Inspired, in part, by Sacred Space. <https://www.sacredspace.ie/scripture/john-8111>
* Scripture

Isaiah and John. <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/040322-YearC.cfm>

Philippians. Revised New International Version, Cultural Study Bible, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 2016)

# Reflection on Scriptures. Adapted from Mary M. McGlone, CSJ, “April 3, 2022: Fifth Sunday of Lent”, dated February 28, 2022.

# <https://www.ncronline.org/sunday-resource/april-3-2022-fifth-sunday-lent>

* Heavenly Mother; Heavenly Father“Unpacking the Lord’s Prayer-With Parker Palmer April 4, 2020”

<https://godspacelight.com/2020/04/04/unpacking-the-lords-prayer-with-parker-palmer/>

* Final Blessing. Adapted from the “Blessing for the Dawn of a New Year” as quoted in flocknote dated January 5, 2022, Blessed Trinity Parish. mail@flocknote.com <mail@flocknote.com>
* Closing Song. Tim Manion. “This Alone.” https://cantusmundi.blogspot.com/2013/04/this-alone-tim-manion.html

# Art.

**“Christ At Rest.”**

Holbein, Hans, 1497-1543. Christ at Rest, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

Source. http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=55429

#  “Christus Victor” – used after first readings from Isaiah and Philippians:

Vasconcellos, Josefina de, 1904-2005. Christus Victor, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=56843> [retrieved March 17, 2022]. Original source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/paullew/10776613035>.

# “Adulteress” - after John’s Gospel <https://www.ncronline.org/sites/default/files/styles/article_full_width/public/Adulteress%20CROP.jpg?itok=P93gDEXm>

**“Jesus speaks about forgiveness.”** – after the reflection

JESUS MAFA. Jesus speaks about forgiveness, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=48384> [retrieved March 17, 2022]. Original source: http://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr (contact page: <https://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr/contact>).