**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**Sixth Sunday of Easter**

**May 22, 2022**

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you” John 14:27

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

**WELCOME** **( Betty)**

Welcome, everyone

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Judy Sholes and Maryann Dolan for preparing today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer and song today: Debra Street, Linda Donaldson, Kate Monagan, Bill and Kathy Cavanaugh, Rose Marie Smith, Mary Ott, Charlotte Cook, Terri Butel, Paula Lake, and Richard McGinnis.

**SETTLING IN**  **( Judy Sholes)**

 We invite you to settle into a comfortable position. Let our collective breath bring us into quiet so we can be attentive to each other and to the Spirit. 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 make space for the Spirit.

(Judy) ) Now Debra Street will lead us in our opening song “Gather Your People.”

**OPENING SONG:**  “Gather Your People” by Bob Hurd   **(Debra Street)**

**Refrain**  
Gather your people, O Lord.  
Gather your people, O Lord.  
One bread, one body, one spirit of love.  
Gather your people, O Lord.

***Verse 1***

Draw us forth to the table of life:  
brothers and sisters,  
each of us called to walk in your light.

**Refrain**

**Verse 2**

We are parts of the body of Christ,  
needing each other,  
each of the gifts the Spirit provides.

**Refrain**

**(Judy)** Kate Monagan will lead us into prayer.

**GREETING (Kate Monagan)**

Beloved Community, let us rejoice in the gifts and the blessings of the Easter season. Alleluia!    Alleluia!

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

**GATHERING PRAYER**  **(Kate Monagan)**

O God who creates and who gives breath,

be with us now as we come to you

with the great longings of our world

and of our selves.

We come together

trusting that the Spirit will be at work in us.

Help us to let go and to let come.

Help us to live the questions

May we inquire, nudge, and challenge each other

To imagine what none of us could conceive alone,

Amen.

**INTRODUCTION OF THE THEME** **( Maryann Dolan)**

Today we will reflect on three examples of how the Spirit of Jesus brings about community, creativity, and peace, even when there is dissention.

In the 1st reading from Acts, we get a picture of the early Christian church grappling with the challenges of a growing and newly diverse community. A creative answer became clear when the leaders met and recognized that the Holy Spirit was active in ways that didn’t fit into the old rules. Their inspired decisions were key to opening this nascent church to the world.

John’s gospel this morning opens with an assurance of love and peace. Love is a constant in the faith of Jesus and his faith in his Abba. But what is this different kind of peace Jesus promises? This peace depends on confidence that the same Spirit that animated Jesus remains with the disciples and teaches them always.

How do we see the Spirit at work today as we shine a light on the contemporary dissensions, divisions, and disagreements in the Christian Community? As we prepare for the celebration of Pentecost 2022, we face the realization that…like the Church in Acts…we also can devolve into competing sects **or** we can collaborate with God’s unifying grace. Do we believe strongly enough in the promise of the Spirit that we will risk dialogue, discernment, and synodality ... to “sing a new church” into the third millennium?

**(Maryann** ) Now Bill Cavanaugh will read from Chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles. Following each reading, Paula Lake will offer questions that will lead us into silence.

**READING 1** (Acts 15:1-4,6-9,19-20,22-29) **(Bill Cavanaugh)**

Some Jewish Christians came from Judea to Antioch and began instructing the Gentile Christians, saying: “Unless you follow the laws of Moses exactly, including circumcision, you cannot be saved.”

Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with them, leading to a spirited debate about this matter. Finally, it was decided that Paul, Barnabas and others would go to Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem, they met with the apostles and elders, who considered the question of what God requires of believers. After much discussion, Peter addressed the Council, saying: “God chose that the Gentiles learn the good news and so become believers. And God, who can read everyone’s heart, showed approval of the Gentiles, by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as to us. God made no distinction between us.” After more discussion, James spoke: “We should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. We should write to them, telling them merely to abstain from food polluted by idols, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood, and from unlawful marriage.”

Here is the letter that they sent to Antioch:

“The apostles and the elders,  
to our sisters and brothers of Gentile origin

in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: greetings.  
We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization, upsetting you with their teaching and disturbing your peace of mind. We have all agreed to send Judas Barsabbas and Silas, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, to confirm by word of mouth what is written in this message:

‘It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place any burden on you beyond these essential practices:  
You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from unlawful marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right.

Farewell.”

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** **(Paula Lake)**

How do you respond when people are disturbed by rules and burdens that turn them away from the church?

When you were in a Christian community that experienced dissension, what role did you take?

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

**(Judy)** Rose Marie Smith will read from the Gospel of John .

**READING 2** (John 14:23-29) **(Rose Marie Smith)**

Jesus said to the disciples:  
“Whoever loves me will keep my word,  
and will have my Abba’s love,  
and we will come and make our dwelling with them.  
 For my word is not mine but that of the One who sent me.  
  
“I have told you this while I am with you.  
The Advocate, the Holy Spirit,  
whom Abba will send in my name,  
will teach you everything  
and remind you of all that I told you.  
Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.  
Not as the world gives do I give it to you.  
Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

“You heard me tell you,  
‘I am going away and I will come back to you.’

If you loved me,  
you would rejoice that I am going to the One who sent me;  
and who is greater than I.  
And now I have told you this before it happens,  
so that when it happens you may believe.”

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** (**Paula Lake)**

How did you become aware of the role the Spirit plays in your life?

When have you felt the peace Jesus gives? How is it different from other kinds of peace?

What is the Spirit teaching you, or what is it that you have yet to learn or understand?

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

**(Judy)** (Kathy Cavanaugh will read a reflection based on Sr. Mary McGlone’s commentary)

**READING 3:**  (Kathy Cavanaugh)

Today’s readings prompt us to consider the current divisions in the Church. Strongly-held beliefs lead some to criticize publicly the teachings of Pope Francis. Strongly-held beliefs lead the majority of Catholic sisters to gospel-driven priorities. Strongly-held beliefs lead some to certainty about what God requires to be considered a believer. Vatican II is seen as an inspiration for Church unity and growth, or as a misguided source of division.

The Holy Spirit has guided the Church all through history.Councils have been ways for the church community to discern direction – like the council at Jerusalem in today’s first reading. Starting in 1962, the Second Vatican Council helped create a truly world church. As many reforms have been sidelined or ignored, some Catholics are pleased and others are frustrated and disenchanted.

We are once again seeing the Holy Spirit at work, nudging us to address the current challenges facing the Church. Pope Francis has responded by formally opening a process called a Synod on Synodality. His emphasis is on mutual listening, during which everyone has something to learn, and dialogue that leads to consensus. As we engage in this process, the Spirit will continue to orient us toward union of heart and mind with God and one another.

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** (**Paula Lake)**

What is behind your decision to participate, or not participate, in the current synodal process?

What kind of future Church do you long for?

Where have you encountered ways of being church that encourage your imagination?

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

(**Judy**) Now Mary Ott will lead us in our sharing.

**SHARING**  ( **Mary Ott**)

 We invite you to **briefly** share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings. This 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 leave a bridge of silence between speakers.

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

Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute again afterwards.

Who would like to begin?........

Ask when closer to the time limit, “Would anyone else like to share?”

(Let sharing continue for about a total of 20 minutes.)

Thank you for your insights and thoughts.  We have to stop now, but we can continue after the final song, as we often do.

(**Mary**) Now Charlotte Cook will lead us as we pray together.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY**  **(Charlotte Cook)**

Let us bring what is in our hearts to God in prayer.

Our response will be:Spirit of Peace, hear our prayer.

For the Church, the people of God, that we might be open and willing to find common ground in order to resolve the divisions of our day. we pray… Spirit of Peace, hear our prayer.

For world leaders, that they provide space for the Holy Spirit to help them find ways to achieve peace in the world, we pray… Spirit of Peace, hear our prayer.

For the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and all women religious who gather to plan a future for their members, society and the earth, with care, compassion and justice, we pray,… Spirit of Peace, hear our prayer.

For the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary as they celebrate the beatification of their foundress Blessed Marie-Rose Durocher: bless and guide them as they keep her spirit and charism alive in our world today. For this we pray…. Spirit of Peace, hear our prayer.

For the Pope Francis in his efforts to pursue peace and unity in the world, we pray…Spirit of Peace, her our prayer.

For what else shall we pray. Please unmute and then mute yourself after your intention.

Thank you.

Loving God, we entrust all of our intentions to you. Help us each day to stand for love, for healing, for unity of the Body of Christ…and all creation. We offer our prayer together with all the holy names of God. Amen

**Musical Reflection** Betty: Start video with no introduction and play at 1.25 speed to 1:50. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhhQACwrEFM>

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION**  **(Terri Butel)**

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 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.]*

Holy One, make us your bread of abundance.  Make us your wine of joy.

Let even our fragments be plenty to share.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER, OUR MOTHER** (**Richard McGinnis) (And ALL, muted)**

Now let us join our hearts with all who seek the coming of God, using the words that Jesus gave us written by the Polynesian and Māori people and the New Zealand Anglican community:

Eternal Spirit,  
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,  
Source of all that is and that shall be,  
Father and Mother 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. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Judy)**

May you be rootedand grounded in enduring love.

May you trust this essential core of goodness within you.

May you choose to be nurtured through times of stillness.

May this root of divinity strengthen and support you.

May you discover inner peace to carry you through travails.

May you return time and again to the Taproot of your life.

Amen

Let us now join Linda Donaldson in our closing song.

**CLOSING SONG How Can I Keep from Singing (Linda Donaldson)**

<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=uhkI41GdCGI&list=OLAK5uy_nE9mDgJQjCTIaFT6286y8tYHqZm_15Amk>

My life flows on in endless song  
Above earth’s lamentations,  
I hear the real, though far-off hymn  
That hails a new creation.

Through all the tumult and the strife  
I hear its music ringing,  
It sounds an echo in my soul.  
How can I keep from singing?

What though my joys and comfort die,  
The Lord my Savior liveth.  
What though the darkness 'gather round,  
Songs in the night it giveth.

The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,  
A fountain ever springing.  
All things are mine since I am his;  
How can I keep from singing?

No storm can shake my inmost calm,  
While to that rock I´m clinging.  
Since Christ is lord of heaven and earth  
How can I keep from singing?

**RESOURCES**

USCCB: readings for May 22, 2022

New Jerusalem Bible, <https://www.bibliacatolica.com.br/en/new-jerusalem-bible/acts/15/>

New International Version Bible, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2015&version=NIV>

Final Blessing, Sr. Joyce Rupp, from the book Return to the Root.

Richard Rohr’s Daily Meditations, May 2, 2022.

Dianne Bergant, Sister of St. Agnes of Fond du Lac - Reflections on the Lectionary Readings.

Scripture for Life: Becoming Catholic, Mary McGlone, Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet - May 26, 2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhhQACwrEFM>   Daniel Iverson