**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer for Advent**

**December 18, 2022, Fourth Sunday**

**Please bring bread that is traditional to your family, or your favorite – and some wine/beverage.**

On the Fourth Sunday of Advent we hear the genealogy of the Christ.

Sojourner Truth’s 1851 speech arguing for female voting rights pretty much nails it: “That little man in black there (presumably a preacher), he says women can’t have as much rights as men, ‘cause Christ wasn’t a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Jesus the Christ.”

**HELLOs and then Betty mutes everyone.**

**WELCOME (Jo’Ann De Quattro)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – are there any people who haven’t been here before?
* Jennie, Vera and I planned our communal prayer for you today.
* Thanks to people who will be reading and providing music for our prayer today: Reggie Ott, Suzie and Jim De Quattro, Vera Ruotolo, Maryann Dolan, Jo’Ann De Quattro, Jennie Lechtenberg, Marie McCarthy, Carolyn Henrich, Mary Dolmage, George Fulk, Debbie Ballard, Judith Galleazzi, Susan Harford, and Betty Thompson.
* Announcements:
  + We want to be sure you know that our Christmas Eve prayer will begin at 4 PM Eastern, with hellos before that. We love seeing your loved ones, too, even if you and they have time only to stop by and say hi between 3:30 and 4 PM Eastern.
  + If you’d like to read on Sunday, January 1, please email Alicia Urban. Her email is will also be in Chat. [For reference: urban261@gmail.com]

**OPENING AND LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH (Reggie Ott, Suzie and Jim De Quattro)**

Love’s Pure Light by Joel Ramey

Reggie**:** Creator of the stars of night, thy people’s everlasting light,

Jesu, Redeemer, Savior of all, hear thy servants when they call.

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and end this gloom of night.

Bring hope to the world, bring peace to the earth, and fill us with love’s pure light.

(Reggie strums softly during reading/response.)

Jim: Please join me in our Response.

Suzie: ❖ During Advent we see the Creator’s love for us embodied in our Savior’s birth.

Jim: R: Christ is our light and the Source of Everlasting Love.

Suzie: ❖ Advent calls us to love others with patience and kindness.

Jim: R: Christ is our light and the Source of Everlasting Love.

Suzie: ❖ Advent calls us to be slow to anger and quick to forgive.

Jim: R: Christ is our light and the Source of Everlasting Love.

Suzie: ❖ Advent reminds us that Christ commanded us to love as Jesus loved.

Jim: R: Christ is our light and the Source of Everlasting Love.

Suzie: Now let us welcome the light. This morning we will light four candles: the candles of hope, peace, joy, and today’s candle: love. This candle reminds us that God so loved the world that the Holy One sent Jesus, the only child of our loving Creator, so that whoever believes in Christ will not perish but will have everlasting life. Today we celebrate that Gift of Love and remember that we have been commanded to love others as our Loving God loves us. (Pause for candle lighting – Reggie will strum softly – then concludes the hymn as follows:)

Reggie: O come, O come, Emmanuel, and end this gloom of night.

Bring hope to the world, bring peace to the earth, and fill us with love’s pure light.

(Suzie) Sr. Vera will help us settle into this time and space together.

**SETTLING IN: (Vera Ruotolo, SNJM)**

Let our 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. Breathe In, and out. (Pause.)

Now LOOK at the community gathered to make space for our loving God who wants to share life with us. (Pause.)

Take a second breath as we come together. Breathe in, and out. {Pause.}

Let’s take another breath to open ourselves to the movement of the Spirit among us.

Breathe in, and out. (Pause.)

**GREETING:** **(Maryann Dolan)**

Alleluia! Alleluia!

The Virgin shall conceive and bear a Child, and they shall name the Child Emmanuel! Alleluia! Alleluia!

All: Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**GATHERING PRAYER: (Maryann Dolan)**

Spirit of the Living God, teach us how to be your community – a living sign of love in our world. Help us to see one another with your eyes of love, to recognize what is ours to do in the world, and to give ourselves over fully to the action of your love in our lives. As we share bread today, may we inquire, nudge, and challenge each other to imagine what none of us could conceive alone. Blessed be.

**CALL TO WORSHIP/REFLECTION: (Jo’Ann De Quattro)**

When we agreed to plan today’s prayer experience, we did it somewhat blindly – looking at the timing for us rather than the scriptures designated for today. When we did look at the Scripture, we found ourselves back where we were when we planned a service in February.

At that time we quoted Linda Romey: “For the sake of what may emerge in generations to come, for the sake of women everywhere, for human wholeness and the survival of our world, we must end patriarchy now… Every time we refer to our genderless God as ‘he’ we are supporting the power of patriarchy. Exclusiveness diminishes God, whereas inclusiveness diminishes patriarchy…Our inclusiveness will change consciousness, both ours and that of others.”

Today’s Gospel reading traces the coming of Jesus – Emmanuel – through the genealogy and lineage of Joseph, son of David. Let’s also look at this from an alternate perspective – one that recognizes the women in the lineage leading to Mary – and to Jesus.

**GOSPEL READING: Matthew 1:18-24 (Jennie Lechtenberg)**

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When Jesus’ mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with Child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph, a righteous man, was unwilling to expose her to shame and decided to divorce her quietly. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and said: “Do not be afraid to take Mary into your home as your wife. It is through the Holy Spirit that this Child has been conceived in her. She will bear a Child whom you are to name Jesus who will save people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill the prophesy: Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Child who will be named Emmanuel, which means “God is with us.”

Ponder these words from Scripture in your heart as we listen to the questions raised in the song:

**Song: Mary, Did you Know?** Pentatonix <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trW_lD9sBt0>

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?

The child that you delivered, will soon deliver you.

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm the storm with his hand?

Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?

When you kiss your little baby, you kiss the face of God.

Mary, did you know? Mary, did you know?

Mary, did you know? Did you know?

Mary, did you know? Mary, did you know?

Mary, did you know? Mary, did you know?

Mary, did you know? Mary, did you know?

The blind will see, the deaf will hear; the dead will live again.

The lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb.

Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all Creation?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day rule the nations?

Did you know your baby boy is heaven’s perfect Lamb?

That sleeping child you’re holding is the great, I AM.

Mary, did you know? Mary, did you know?

Mary, did you know? Mary, did you know?

Mary, did you know? Oh.

**Jennie:** Marie McCarthy will read an excerpt from an NCR article by Christine Schenk.

**FIRST READING: (Marie McCarthy)**

“Genealogies were very important in antiquity. They tried to explain a person’s importance in light of the HIStory of those who had gone before, and helped establish the identity and status of that person… Matthew’s genealogy works hard to link the birth of Jesus to Joseph and the proud Davidic patriarchal lineage from which every good Jew knew the Messiah would come (Jer.23:5-6). The first line tells it all: The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.’

“There is one problem with this genealogy: Jesus is the Son of Mary, not the Son of Joseph!”

[Pause.]

(Marie McCarthy) Carolyn Henrich will offer questions for your reflection in silence. Feel free to stay with any question that speaks to you. Mary Dolmage will read the second Reading.

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:** Pause after each question. (Carolyn Henrich )

What did you hear that caused you to think differently? [Pause.]

What did you hear that made you feel uncomfortable? [Pause.]

What did you hear that challenged you? [Pause.]

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** (Betty: Slide, time, chime)

**Betty:** Mary Dolmage will read **“**A Genealogy of Jesus Christ” by Ann Patrick Ware.

**SECOND READING: (Mary Dolmage)**

A genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of Miriam, the daughter of Anna: Sarah was the mother of Isaac, and Rebekah was the mother of Jacob, Leah was the mother of Judah… [T]he names of the mothers of Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon and Salomon have been lost… Rahab was the mother of Boaz, and Ruth was the mother of Obed. Obed’s wife, whose name is unknown, bore Jesse. The wife of Jesse was the mother of David. Bathsheba was the mother of Solomon.

Then the deportation to Babylon took place and the names of the mothers go unrecorded. The sum of generations is: FOURTEEN from Sarah to David’s mother; FOURTEEN from Bathsheba to the Babylonian deportation; and FOURTEEN from the Babylonian deportation to Miriam, the Mother of Christ.

(Mary Dolmage) Carolyn Henrich will offer questions for your reflection in silence. Feel free to stay with any question that speaks to you.

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**: Pause after each question. ( Carolyn Henrich )

What did you hear that caused you to think differently? [Pause.]

What did you hear that made you feel uncomfortable? [Pause.]

What did you hear that challenged you? [Pause.]

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**  (Betty: Slide, time, chime)

**Betty:** Now George Fulk will read a passage from Fr. Raymond Brown

**THIRD READING: (George Fulk)**

In his classic book on the infancy narratives, *The Birth of the Messiah*, Scripture scholar Raymond Brown explains: “It is the combination of the scandalous or irregular union and of divine intervention through the women that explains Matthew’s choice in the genealogy… Matthew has chosen women who foreshadow the role of Mary, the wife of Joseph. In the eyes of men her pregnancy was a scandal since she had not yet lived with her husband; yet the child was actually begotten through God’s Holy Spirit, so God intervened to bring to fulfillment the messianic heritage.

What could better witness the power of an unpredictable God than to raise up a long-awaited Messiah from the least powerful of humans – a child born of an unwed mother? What better witness than a child with no apparent biological father, and therefore no claim to patriarchal privilege?”

[Pause]

**REFLECTIVE QUESTION:**  **(Carolyn Henrich)**

After listening to this reading and the song ‘Blessed is She’, what images speak to you or stay with you?

If you forgot to bring bread and beverage, we invite you, if you wish, to bring it into the room during the song

**BLESSED IS SHE by Colleen Fulmer** Play [https://youtu.be/P\_ZjCQKwYIw 2:53](https://youtu.be/P_ZjCQKwYIw%202:53) Betty: Project Image of Haitian Madonna

Blessed is she, who believed that the promise made her by our God

would be fulfilled, would be fulfilled.

And Mary said: “Let me sing the praise of God for having touched this lowly one

and from now on I shall be called ‘Woman most highly blessed.’”

Blessed is she, who believed that the promise made her by our God

would be fulfilled, would be fulfilled.

Holy is our God whose kindness never ends, who by great strength

has scattered the proud and raises up the poor and gathers them into all fullness.

Blessed is she, who believed that the promise made her by our God

would be fulfilled, would be fulfilled.

For God has come to this servant Israel to show all mercy now and forever

as was promised Sarah and Abraham and their children forever.

Blessed is she, who believed that the promise made her by our God

would be fulfilled, would be fulfilled.

**Betty:** Debbie Ballard will lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Debbie Ballard)**

We invite you to share briefly what emerged in your heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on the readings, songs and commentary. Our sharing helps us to realize the many ways God is among us. We welcome new voices. We also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening. As you share, please use “I” or “me” statements.

Let’s remember to leave a bridge of silence between speakers. A bridge of silence allows us to absorb what has been said and to influence what you may wish to share.

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

Who would like to begin our sharing? Please unmute yourself to speak and mute after you speak.

(Sharing) Conclude by 20 minutes after the hour.

Thank you.

(Debbie Ballard) Now Judith Galleazi will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Judith Galleazzi)**

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

Loving God, you have called, chosen, and empowered each of us to be living signs of your love in our world. May we respond generously to that call, and help to create a just and loving society. We pray, Holy One, hear our prayer.

Loving God, strengthen all women religious, especially the members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Recreate them for your purpose in this place and in this time. Give them courage to exercise leadership in our broken church and world. We pray, Holy One, hear our prayer.

Loving God, heal the divisions in our world. Help us all to learn to work together for a just and equitable society. Help us to bring about your beloved community in our world. We pray, Holy One 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 yourself and end your petition with “For this we pray.” Our response is: Holy One hear our prayer.

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

Thank you.

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.

**PRAYER OF JESUS: (Susan Harford)**

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 Mother, Father, Loving God in heaven, holy be your name.

Your New Community come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for the New Community, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Blessed be.

**BLESSING BEFORE A MEAL: (Jo’Ann De Quattro)**

As we prepare to share this meal, let us be conscious of the Holy One we call our Creator, Friend, Mother, Father, Sister, Brother, Redeemer, and Provider.

Mindful of those who tilled the soil, those who harvested its bounty, and those who toiled in the heat of sun and kitchen, we ask blessings on all of them; they are here with us in a special way.

We ask you, Holy One, to accept these gifts and transform them into plenty to share with our sisters and brothers in need. Accept our gratitude for your love and grace. Accept our efforts to give thanks for each other.

Bless & inspire all young people to realize their visions of a better world, a world of peace. Bless those whose generosity and commitment makes possible their dreams: their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers, and all others.

Bless all of us as we struggle to be engaged in the transformation of our world.

Bless us as we become eucharist for one another.

Give us and our world, we pray, plenty of knowledge and wisdom, plenty of justice and compassion, plenty of bread and peace.

Hold the bread in your hands. “Let us extend our hands outward and bless this bread in thanksgiving for life. Open our eyes to see the hunger of others. (Pause) Share the bread with each other (Pause) Hold the cup/glass. Share the wine/beverage with each other. (Pause) Thank you, Creator God, for promising and giving us food for the journey.”

Let us say together: Amen. So be it! Blessed be!

**FINAL BLESSING: (Vera Ruotolo)**

Broken, we have gathered;

Nourished, let us now reach out.

May our steps lead us to paths of service,

Our words, to the healing of troubled hearts,

Our touch, to the embrace of compassion,

Our hearts, to perform random acts of kindness.

Now let us now go forth in peace,

in communion with each other,

and offer eucharist to a hungry world.

Blessed be.

**CLOSING SONG:** [**https://youtu.be/ivuZRJswJn0**](https://youtu.be/ivuZRJswJn0) (end about 1:14-1:15)

**Love’s Pure Light** by Joel Raney

Creator of the stars of night, thy people’s everlasting light,

Jesu, Redeemer, Savior of all, hear thy servants when they call.

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and end this gloom of night.

Bring hope to the world, bring peace to the earth, and fill us with love’s pure light.

Bring hope, and joy, and peace, and fill us with love’s pure light.

**RESOURCES:**

“Jesus’ birth to a single mom signals prophetic challenge to the patriarchy” by Christine Schenk, NCR 12-22-21. Sojourner Truth is quoted in this article as is Raymond Brown as used in Reading.

The Linda Romey, OSB article that is quoted in the Introduction to Theme is from Global Sisters Report at <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/religious-life/column/its-time-find-out-where-religious-life-can-go-without-patriarchy> .

Bread Blessing: Stirring WATERS: feminist liturgies for justice, Diann L. Neu, Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual, Silver Spring, MD, www.waterwomensalliance.org Liturgical Press, 2020. Special thanks to WATER for providing the lyrics to Blessed is She.