**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**June 25th, 2023**

**12th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

“*With courage you dare to take risks, have the strength to be compassionate, and the wisdom to be humble. Courage is the foundation of integrity.” (Gandhi)*

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

**WELCOME ( Bill Cavanaugh )**

Welcome, everyone!

* Kathy and I prepared our prayer for today.
* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Judy Sholes, Kathy and Lin Linabery, Mia and Tim Brown, Mary Dolmage, Cecilia Estrada, and Sr Jacqueline Quinn.
* We are always looking for new readers and grateful for all readers, especially in these summer times of travel. If you are available on July 2, contact Alicia Urban. For July 9, contact Terri Butel or Peg Duchesne. You can leave a message in Chat or email the planners.

**SETTLING IN (Kathy Cavanaugh)**

As we begin to settle into this time together let us spend a minute quietly gazing at each other, with eyes of joy “You’re Here!” deeply appreciating the presence of each unique person.  *(pause)*

Now,  Let your breath slow and deepen as we offer thanks to the Holy One for this time together. Let us celebrate the amazing truth that God is in love with us.

Notice your breath as it goes in and out…. Let it slow and deepen….and slowly fill you with the Peace of Christ and Power of the Holy Spirit.

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 let us enter into our prayer together by singing: “All That We Have” (Gary Ault & Gary Daigle)

**OPENING SONG** **- “All That We Have” ( Betty shares screen )**

<https://youtu.be/k16C-ukG-KI> (Play at 1.25 to the end.)

Refrain: All that we have and all that we offer

 Comes from a heart both frightened and free.

 Take what we bring now and give what we need.

 All done in His name.

1. Some would rely on their power,

 Others put trust in their gold.

 Some have only their Savior

 Whose faithfulness never grows old.

2) Sometimes the road may be lonesome,

 Often we may lose our way.

 Take courage and always remember

 Love isn’t just for a day.

**Bill:** Now **Judy Sholes** will lead us in our gathering prayer

**CALL TO WORSHIP/ GATHERING PRAYER ( Judy Sholes )**

We join together in prayer this morning,

grateful that we are always welcomed by God,

the Heart of All Being.

We bear witness to our faith,

knowing that we are called:

 to live lives of courage, love and reconciliation,

in the ordinary and extraordinary moments of each day.

We bear witness also to our failures and our complicity in the fractures of our world.

May we be courageous today.

May we learn today.

May we love today.

Blessed Be!

*[Pause]*

Kathy Cavanaugh will introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Kathy Cavanaugh)**

Today’s theme is living courageously with our fears. The Spirit’s gift of courage helps us to trust in God as our true source of strength. Three times (!!) in today’s Gospel Jesus encourages us “Fear not”! We are invited to trust the love of God that infuses all of reality. But, in reality, everyone faces scary things. Trusting God’s faithfulness and Presence is easier said than done. Fear is natural! Moving through the “No” of fear to the “Yes” of love requires committed relationships with God and community. We need someone to hold and accompany us as we expand our circle of caring to include all people, all places, all of creation. When we come to listen to our fear, and listen to the fears of others, we may find that we’re all just trying, like the early Christian community, to figure out how to love and be courageous— living and proclaiming the good news of God’s justice and mercy.

*[Pause]*

Now **Lin Linabery** will read from the Gospel of Matthew and **Bill Cavanaugh** will offer questions for silent reflections.

**READING 1 : ( Matthew 10, 26-31 )**  **( Lin Linabery )**

Jesus said : “ *Fear no one*! Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Creator’s knowledge. Even all the hairs on your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

*[Slight pause.]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 1 ( Bill Cavanaugh )**

1. How has the gift of courage helped you through an oppressive time?
2. What is the courage you pray for ?

3) How has God’s love and community helped you through fearful times?

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

**Bill:**  Now **Kathy Linabery** will read a reflection on today’s Gospel from Sr. Mary McGlone.

**READING 2 : ( Kathy Linabery )**

We are alerted to beware that following Jesus often brings persecution, rejection, and even death. Fear of persecution and suffering can block our trust and gratitude for God’s providence and presence. Jesus reassures us that we can trust God to be with us: emphasizing the intimacy of our relationship with our Creator. God knows everything about us (how many hairs on our head)! ….and deeply cares for us (and all creation). Jesus asks his followers not to be afraid to bring what He has told them, to bring the Gospel message, into the light….bring it out from inner rooms to be made known to all.

Jesus’ answer to persecution offers no tit-for-tat. Rather Jesus begins from God’s love.

His message is a prelude to the way He responded to His persecutors. That is: Don’t let them inhabit your head! They can chase you and reject you, even kill you: but your heart and mind can remain free —if you are grounded in the Love of God who called you and undergoes this suffering with you. This message of nonviolent proclaiming midst oppression encourages us to discern our call in prayer and community and to show up as active proclaimers of justice and mercy.

“Fear no one”! Perhaps Jesus is warning us that physical harm is nothing compared to the power revenge has to eat away at one’s spiritual and even physical well being. In line with his command to love our enemies, Jesus cautions us that hatred and vengeance do more harm to ourselves and community than to the perpetrator. Real love of the enemy disarms and nourishes everyone involved. Our greatest powers do not come from intellectual prowess but from the attitudes that motivate our actions. As Paul taught the Romans, what changes world history is the gracious gift of Jesus Christ overflowing for the many. May our courage flower through the cracks of our dark and desert times.

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 2 ( Bill Cavanaugh )**

1. How can you avoid feeling like a victim when following Jesus leads to persecution or rejection?
2. What helps you discern your own motivation to speak and act for justice and mercy?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE *[Betty:*** *Share slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.****]***

 **Bill:** Now **Mia Brown** will read reflections adapted from “Be Not Afraid” from Daily Meditations from the Center of Action and Contemplation:

**READING 3 ( Mia Brown )**

Richard Rohr believes that when we learn to name and embrace our fears, instead of merely denying them, we are less likely to project them onto others as we tend to expel or dump fears we are not aware of. This gives us a negative energy and identity. Allowing our fears to define us formulates our priorities as ‘what we are against, whom we don’t like, and who else is wrong’. Instead, Rohr encourages us to acknowledge our fears. Then we can authentically define ourselves by what we believe *in* and whom we *love.* Conversing with our fear, understanding fear as an emotion to become curious about, and ultimately befriend, is part of our growing in faith. Faith grounded in true self and shared in community frees us to love more fearlessly.

Cole Arthur Riley, writer and creator of the online prayer space Black Liturgies, views fear as a place to discover God’s compassion for us:

 “When I hear “Don’t be afraid” (mentioned over 150 times in the Bible), I hope that it is not a command not to fear but rather it is the nurturing voice of God drawing near to our trembling.

 I hear these words and imagine God in all tenderness cradling her creation against her breast.”

…..”Perhaps it is not the indictment of God we are sensing but our own indictment that fear signifies a less robust faith. I wouldn’t dare criticize Christ in the garden——sweating, crying, pleading for God to let this cup pass from him (Luke22:41-44). This is a Christ who knew fear deeply. And if Jesus has been afraid, I have to believe God is tender with our own fears.”

“It is a beautiful thing that in the face of terror, God doesn’t bid us toward courage as we might perceive it. Instead, we are invited to discover that our fear is woven into God’s own life. A life mysteriously woven into all the scary things that can and do happen to us as human beings together on this earth.”

“Let fear in, just don’t let it run you or hold you in bondage. It can protect you. For example, no one would deny it is a good thing that we are terrified to jump from building to building. Fear can steady our impulses and warn us of danger. It can be considered akin to a protector rather than the enemy. Fear has the holy potential to draw out awe in us. To lead us into deeper patterns of protection and trust. To mold us into courageous companions united on this faith journey, engaged in the unknown, capable of making mystery of it instead of terror.”

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 3 ( Bill Cavanaugh )**

1. What are you most afraid of today? Converse with it and listen to what it says to you.
2. In what ways do you calm your fears?

2) In what ways do you calm your fears?

3) Spend time with Jesus in His fear in the garden. How will you be with Him? What will you say, if anything?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** ***[Betty:*** *Share slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.****]***

**SHARING ( Bill Cavanaugh )**

We invite you to share the essence that emerged in **your** heart this morning as you have reflected upon our readings and music. We welcome everyone who wants to speak. Each of you holds a spark that brightens what we see together. We welcome **everyone** who wants to speak. We also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening.

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

Now who would like to start our sharing?

*[People share brief personal reflections.]*

*[If there is extended silence during the sharing:]* Is there anyone else who would like to share?  *[Silence is space for reflection.]*

*[Stop by 20 minutes after the hour.]*

Thank you to each of you who has spoken and who has listened. We can continue after the final song, as we often do.

Let us hold onto what the Holy One is saying in our reflections as we turn to God in prayer.

**Bill:** Now **Mary Dolmage** will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY ( Mary Dolmage )**

Let’s pause to notice the prayers that arise in us now. (Pause)

Our response will be: **“Holy One, hear our prayer!”**

God within us, may our lives shine in the sacrament of the present moment trusting in your Presence to be fearless to love wherever love is absent:

 For this we pray. **“ Holy One, hear our prayer !”**

God among us, be comfort, strength, and inspiration for women religious in these times of profound changes.

 For this we pray. **“ Holy One, hear our prayer!”**

God beside us, help us do the next right thing about violence and injustice. Show us how to be with victims of violence, those without shelter, prisoners, and immigrants seeking asylum from persecution. Help us to act for you wherever we see injustice in our ordinary life experiences.

 For this we pray. “**Holy One, hear our prayer!”**

God beyond us, may we grow in communion with pope Francis as he asks the Synod of Bishops and us, “Don’t be afraid when there is disorder provoked by the Spirit in order to fearlessly change a church weighed down by clericalism.”

For this we pray. **“ Holy One, hear our prayer !”**

God within us, may we pause often to give thanks; to tell you our fears; to remember that you suffer with us; and to reach out to listen to other’s fears.

For this we pray: **“ Holy One, hear our prayer!”**

For what else shall we pray? Please end your prayer with:

 **“For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer !”**

*[ People share their prayers.]* Holy One, 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.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION ( Cecilia Estrada )**

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 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, we entrust ourselves to you and to one another.

Make us your bread of abundance.  Make us your wine of joy.

Let even our fragments be plenty to share.

Amen.

To extend our communion **Sister Jacqueline Quinn** will lead us in the Prayer of Jesus.

**THE PRAYER OF JESUS ( Sr. Jacqueline Quinn )**

Now let us join our hearts with all who seek the coming of God, using the words that Jesus gave us as 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 ( Tim Brown )**

Blessing of Courage ( © Jan Richardson from the “Cure for Sorrow))

I can not say where it lives,

only that it comes to the heart that is open,

to the heart that asks,

to the heart that does not turn away.

It can take practice,

days of tugging at what keeps us bound,

seasons of pushing against

what keeps us small.

When it arrives,

it might surprise you by how quiet it is,

how it moves with such grace

 for possessing such power.

But you will know it by the strength

of the knot in your chest

that suddenly lets go,

You will recognize it

by how fear becomes,

as it loosens its grip,

perhaps never quite leaving you,

but calmly turning into joy

as you enter the life that is finally your own.

**Blessed Be!**

**CLOSING SONG: – “Be Not Afraid” ( Betty shares screen )**

<https://youtu.be/FN5iOdPGg38> (Play at 1.25 speed to the end.)

1)You shall cross the barren desert, but you shall not die of thirst.

You shall wander far in safety, though you do not know the way.

You shall speak your words in foreign lands and all will understand.

You shall see the face of God and live.

Be not afraid.

I go before you always.

Come, follow me,

And I will give you rest.

2) If you pass through raging waters, in the sea you shall not drown.

If you walk amid the burning flames, you shall not be harmed.

If you stand before the pow’r of hell and death is at your side,

Know that I am with you through it all.

3)Blessed are your poor, for the kindom shall be theirs.

Blest are you that weep and mourn, for one day you shall laugh.

And if wicked tongues insult and hate you all because of me,

Blessed, blessed are you!

**RESOURCES**

Gathering Prayer: Padraig O Tuama from Daily Prayer with the Corrymeela Community https;//[amzn.to/2NTcDtM](http://amzn.to/2NTcDtM)

Gospel Reflection adapted from: Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time Reflection: June 25, 2023 by Sr. Mary McGlone

<https://ncronline.org/june-25-2023-twelfth-sunday-ordinary-time>

“Be Not Afraid” reflections adapted from Franciscan Father Richard Rohr’s “What Do We Do With Our Fears?" and Cole Arthur Riley’s “Being Tender With Our Fears”: Center For Action and Contemplation: March 29th and 30th, 2022.

Pope Francis Synod comments from Catholic News Service, Vatican City—May 25, 2023

“The great enemy of this process is fear.”

<https://www.ncronline.org/vatican-news/church-many-pope-addresses-somesynod-questions-fears>

Poem: “*Blessing of Courage*” by Jan Richardson’s book; “Cure For Sorrow”.

<https://pollycastor.com/2023/03/03/blessing-of-courage-poem-by-jan-richardson/>

Images:

* Gift of Courage © Jan Richardson <https://www.janrichardsonimages.com/>
* Photo by sankavi at Unsplash – found at <https://medium.com/brightereveryday/how-to-befriend-fear-and-use-it-to-your-advantage-60068313e543>
* Mighty Oak Tree - <https://churchleaders.com/children/childrens-ministry-articles/330657-growing-mighty-oak-trees.html>

Background on Ordinary Time, “the sacrament of the present moment,” “the scandal of the particular,” etc.

* Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister source: <https://www.joanchittister.org/word-from-joan/entire-world-sacramental>
* Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser - [Everyday Life as Sacrament - Ron Rolheiser](https://ronrolheiser.com/everyday-life-as-sacrament/#.ZEX4qM7MLrc)
* Franciscan Father Richard Rohr: <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/seeing-and-recognizing-are-not-the-same-2023-04-14/>