**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, August 2, 2020**

*Broken, we have gathered. Nourished, we reach out.*

**TECHNICAL CHECK-IN (Betty)**

I’m Betty Thompson and I welcome you here on behalf of Solidarity with Sisters.

* We sent the files of readings, responses, and lyrics.
* Camera: turn on if you want. Gallery view option.
* Mute/Unmute: know how? Needed even during singing.
* **I will now mute everybody.** Unmute to speak.

Now let’s put technical things aside.

**WELCOME (Betty)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Suzie and I had the pleasure of preparing today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to Stu Sklamm and Reggie Ott for leading us in music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer during our prayer today – Alicia Urban, Tim Brown, Jill McGowan, Marilyn Voigt, Mary Ott, Lynn Bufka, and Richard McGinnis. If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Betty)**

We are here to let God transform us. So let’s open ourselves to God. Feel the comfort of your chair and relax into it… and relax into God’s love for you. Feel your chest and stomach rise and fall as you breathe… and know the Spirit is moving in you gently and easily. Now let’s take 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together….and one to be open to God’s action.

Now Stu Sklamm will lead us into our celebration.

**OPENING – COME TO THE WATER (Stu Sklamm)**

O let all who thirst, let them come to the water.

And let all who have nothing, let them come to the Lord:

without money, without price.

Why should I pay the price, except for the Lord?

And let all who seek, let them come to the water.

And let all who have nothing, let them come to the Lord:

without money, without strife.

Why should I spend your life, except for the Lord?

**GREETING (Suzie)**

Sisters and brothers, rejoice!The Spirit of Christ is among us! Alleluia!

**All:** And all God’s people reply: Amen! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Suzie)**

We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as the people of God and the body of Christ. As Monsignor Lyon used to tell us, “We gather to celebrate the great fact that God is in love with us.”

We come expecting something to happen this morning. We believe that whenever two or three gather in the name of Jesus, then Jesus is right here. So we are confident that in this next hour God will act in us and give us insight about how to go forth and make the Gospel visible in more ways and in more places. We say yes to this call and we seek light for our next step. And now let us pray.

**GATHERING PRAYER (Suzie)**

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

and to move with you, in you, and toward you,

ever open to what is waiting to be born in us.

Amen.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Suzie)**

In today’s readings we are challenged to change our theology of scarcity to one of abundance. In Isaiah, the prophet tells us to come and feast for free. In Romans, Paul reminds us of the everlasting covenant that God has made with us and all of creation. And in Matthew’s gospel, we hear the story of how five loaves of bread and two fishes fed a large crowd with much left over. There is always enough. The universe always has more than enough of itself to give.

In the midst of the structural stinginess and over-consumption of our present world, how do we change consciousness and operate from mercy and graciousness?

The story of the loaves and fishes is told six times in the New Testament and never once does the bible say that Jesus multiplied them. Consider the possibility that Jesus asked the apostles to share all they had and, in doing that, they set off a wave of sharing that let everyone be satisfied.

After each reading, we will offer questions before we pause for silent reflection. Don’t feel you have to answer all questions. To stay with only one of them might lead you into a deeper place.”

Now Tim will read from the 55th chapter of Isaiah. Then Jim will offer questions for our reflection.

**READING 1:** [**ISAIAH 55:1-3**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/isaiah/55:1) **(Tim Brown)**

Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty! Though you have no money, come! Buy and eat -- come, buy wine and milk without money, free! Why spend money on what cannot nourish, and your wages on what fails to satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and you will have good things to eat and rich food to enjoy. Pay attention. Come to me. Listen, and you will live. I shall make an everlasting covenant with you.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro)**

Often we live with an inner worry about whether we have enough for ourselves and enough to share. How might you change if you deeply believe that you will be nourished abundantly, without price and without cost?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) (Betty)**

**Betty:**

Now Alicia will read from the 8th chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans.

**READING 2:** [**ROMANS 8:35, 37-39**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/romans/8:35) **(Alicia Urban)**

Can anything cut us off from the love of Christ? Can hardships or distress, or persecution, or lack of food and clothing, or threats or violence? For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nothing already in existence and nothing still to come, nor any power, nor the heights nor the depths, nor any created thing whatever, will be able to come between us and the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)**

What does it mean to live in the utter confidence that nothing - nothing! - can separate you from the love of God?

When have you cut yourself off from God and what brought you back?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) (Betty)**

**Betty:**

Now Jill will read from the 14th chapter of Matthew.

**READING 3:** [**Matthew 14:13-21**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/matthew/14:13) **(Jill McGowan)**

When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew by boat to a lonely place. But the crowds heard of this and, leaving the towns, went after him on foot. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them and healed their sick.

When evening came, the disciples went to him and said, 'This is a lonely place, and time has slipped by; so send the people away, and they can go to the villages to buy themselves some food.” Jesus replied, “There is no need for them to go: give them something to eat yourselves.” But they answered, “All we have with us is five loaves and two fishes.”

So he said, “Bring them here to me.” He gave orders that the people were to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. And breaking the loaves he handed them to his disciples, who gave them to the crowds.

They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected the scraps left over, twelve baskets full. Now about five thousand men had eaten, to say nothing of women and children.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)**

Imagine this story as a disciple, as the food, as one of the crowd, or as a basket laden with scraps.

How can you set off a wave of sharing that will leave everyone nourished?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) (Betty)**

**Betty:**

Now Marilyn will read a reflection on the themes of these scriptures.

**READING 4: A reflection from Sr. Simone Campbell, “A Theology of Abundance,” and Fr. Richard Rohr, “Scarcity or Abundance?” (Marilyn Voigt)**

A reflection from Sr. Simone Campbell titled “A Theology of Abundance,” and from Fr. Richard Rohr titled “Scarcity or Abundance?”

It is tempting to collect assets and wealth, whether to protect against future hardship or because one feels that is the measure of self-worth. But doing so is incompatible with the trust we are called to place in God and the care we are called to provide to our one human family.

In miracles and parables, Jesus taught his disciples about a new way to live together, caring for each other without any fear of scarcity. How do we find that new way? Fr. Rohr writes: Only a personal experience of **unconditional, unearned, and infinite love** **and forgiveness** can move you from the normal worldview of scarcity to the divine world of infinite abundance. That’s when the doors of mercy blow wide open! That’s when we begin to understand the scale-breaking nature of grace.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)**

When have you had a personal experience of unconditional love?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) (Betty)**

Now Mary Ott will lead us in 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. When we speak of our own **personal** feelings, we glimpse the many ways God is among us.

If you would like to speak, please unmute yourself, and mute yourself again afterwards. If two people speak at once, we can take turns.

Who would like to begin our sharing?

(Sharing)

Thank you.

Now Lynn will lead us in prayer.

**COMMUNITY PRAYERS (Lynn Bufka)**

We have just listened to God’s word – in scripture, in everyone’s reflections, and in our hearts and minds. Isaiah\* tells us that God’s word always achieves what it was sent to do. Let’s pause in silence so we can each answer this question: This morning, what is God’s word here to do **in me**? What has the word of God invited me to become or to do? [Pause….]

God within us, thank you for the awareness you give us today. Each day this week, we ask you to show us how to make your word into our reality.

*(\** [*Isaiah, 55*](https://www.bibliacatolica.com.br/en/new-jerusalem-bible/isaiah/55/?utm_source=bibliacatolica&utm_medium=share_text&utm_campaign=copy_and_paste):11 - *"My word that goes from my mouth: it will not return to me unfulfilled or before having achieved what it was sent to do.")*

Now, as we offer our prayers, our response will be: Holy One, hear our prayer.

God among us, give us the courage to risk looking at what we have with confidence in your promise of abundance, so that we can build a society in solidarity with people who are unheard or vulnerable, and with Earth itself. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

God in all things, we thank you for the endless ways you are present in this pivotal time. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

God of love, pour your abundance into the Leadership Conference of Women Religious as they gather on August 12th through 15th in their annual Assembly. For this 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 unmute yourself as you speak. Please end your petition with “for this we pray.”

(People speak.)

Thank you.

O Abundant Love, we place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care, and we entrust the outcome to you. As we do, we use the words of Sister Simone Campbell:

I always joked that the miracle of  
loaves and fish was sharing.  
But in this moment of need   
I ache, tremble, almost weep at  
folks so hungry, so malnourished, and faced  
with spiritual famine of epic proportions.

My heart aches with their need.  
Apostle-like, I whine, what are we  
among so many?  
The consistent 2,000-year-old ever-new  
response is this:

“Blessed and broken, you are enough.”  
I savor the “blessed,” cower at the “broken,” and  
pray to be enough.  Amen.

**OFFERING/STEWARDSHIP (Richard McGinnis)**

In response to the grace and goodness of our God, we are mindful of the great blessings we enjoy. We desire to see these as abundance to be shared with a broken world. Let us take time to name within ourselves something we will offer to others in recognition of all that we have received from God. [Pause.]

In thanksgiving for the presence and power of Jesus Christ, and in unity with the Holy Spirit, let us pray. God of abundance, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so we that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Suzie)**

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 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.

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

gifts of the 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.]

Let us invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence. [Pause.]

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your love.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Betty)**

Now let us pray in harmony with all Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus gave us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Betty)**

Broken, we have gathered. Nourished, we reach out.

Now let us now go forth in peace:

in communion with each other

and offering communion to a hungry world. Amen.

Now Reggie will lead us in “Bread to Share”:

**CLOSING: BREAD TO SHARE by Marty Haugen (Reggie Ott)**

Refrain: Plenty of bread at the feast of life, plenty of bread to share.  
Plenty of bread at the feast of life, there is plenty of bread to share.

1. Bread for every hunger: we have plenty to share.  
The bread of joy and gladness: we have plenty to share.  
The bread of grace and mercy: we have plenty to share,  
we have plenty of bread to share.

2. Bread for those who sorrow: we have plenty to share.  
The bread of life and laughter: we have plenty to share.  
The bread of strength and justice: we have plenty to share,  
we have plenty of bread to share.

3. Bread for every sister: we have plenty to share.  
Bread for every brother: we have plenty to share.  
Bread for freedom's journey: we have plenty to share,  
we have plenty of bread to share.

4. Bread of hope and kindness: we have plenty to share.  
Bread of your compassion: we have plenty to share.  
Bread of love and welcome: we have plenty to share,  
we have plenty of bread to share.

**Sources** for insights and excerpts used in the Introduction to Theme, Reflection Questions, Reflection, and Prayers of the Faithful:

Sr. Simone Campbell, “A Theology of Abundance” (<https://networkadvocates.org/21stcenturypoverty/abundance/>)

Fr. Richard Rohr, “Scarcity or Abundance?”

(<https://cac.org/scarcity-or-abundance-2018-07-05/>)

Sr. Simone Campbell, “Loaves and Fishes” poem in the 2013 reflective journal of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious

<https://lcwr.org/publications/navigating-shifts>

Casey Stanton, homily for the 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2020

(<https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/08022020>)

Sr. Mary M. McGlone, resources for the 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2020

(<https://www.ncronline.org/sunday-resource/aug-2-2020-eighteenth-sunday-ordinary-time>)