**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, Sept. 6, 2020**

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

**TECHNICAL CHECK-IN (Betty Thompson)**

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, Gallery/Speaker view. Second screen? Mute/unmute, 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 for leading us in music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today – Ann Jelen, Anne Regan, Tim and Mia Brown, Charlotte Cook, and Jim De Quattro, and also Richard McGinnis and Andy Thompson in case the De Quattros’ Internet wobbles. If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Suzie DeQuattro / Betty backup)**

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.  Notice your body and any tension you are carrying with you.  Notice your thoughts and try to put aside those that distract you.  Notice your breath.  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 – SEND DOWN THE FIRE by Marty Haugen (Stu Sklamm)**

Refrain: Send down the fire of your justice,

Send down the rains of your love;

Come, send down the Spirit,

Breathe life in your people,

And we shall be people of God.

1 Call us to be your compassion,  
Teach us the song of your love;  
Give us hearts that sing,  
Give us deeds that ring,  
Make us ring with the song of your love. Refrain

2 Call us to learn of your mercy,  
Teach us the way of your peace;  
Give us hearts that feel,  
Give us hands that heal,  
Make us walk in the way of your peace. Refrain

**GREETING (Betty)**

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

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

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Betty)**

We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as the people of God and the body of Christ. We gather to celebrate the great fact that God is in love with us. We are confident that in this next hour God will act in us and through us. We believe that God will give us light for our next step. And now let us pray.

**GATHERING PRAYER (Betty)**

God of prophets, God of grace,

teach us how to be your community –

to see one another with your eyes of love

and to recognize what is ours to do in the world.

May we inquire, nudge, and challenge each other

to imagine what none us could conceive alone.

Amen.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Suzie)**

Jesus in his life and ministry turns the conventional upside down. Today he asks us to invent new ways for dealing with serious difficulties and differences in the community.

In Jesus’ time, people brought big issues before the Sanhedrin for judgment. Matthew challenges us to resolve disagreements differently, within the community. Jesus wants us to remain in relationship even in disagreement. Even if a person isn’t a good fit for the community, Jesus tells us to treat them as we would tax collectors – and Jesus had friendly dinners with tax collectors. Paul reminds us that we do this all in the context of loving others as we love ourselves. The word Paul uses is agape: whole-hearted, generous commitment to the good of the other. As Sister Janet Mock has written, “It’s not about winning the argument, it’s about seeking truth together.” What can we learn from these readings about how we are to act today?

Now Tim Brown will read from the 13th chapter of the book of Romans. Then Jim De Quattro will offer questions for our reflection.

**READING 1** -- [**ROM 13:8-10**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/romans/13?8) **(Tim Brown)**

Sister and brothers: The only thing you should owe to anyone is love for one another, for to love the other person is to fulfil the law.

All these: You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, and all the other commandments that there are, are summed up in this single phrase: You must love your neighbor as yourself.

Love can cause no harm to your neighbor, and so love is the fulfilment of the Law.

The time has come; the moment is here for you to stop sleeping and wake up. "

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro/Andy backup) (Slides - Betty)**

In difficult relationships, what helps you to keep the spark of generous love alive?

“The moment is here.” How are you waking up when it comes to loving your neighbor as yourself? What parts of you want to stay asleep?

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

Now Mia Brown will read from the 18th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

**READING 2 --** [**MT 18:15-20**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/18?15) **(Mia Brown)**

It is never the will God that one should be lost. If your brother or sister does something wrong, go and have it out with them alone, between your two selves. If they listen to you, you have won back your brother or sister.

If your brother or sister does not listen, take one or two others along with you: whatever the misdemeanor, the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain the charge. But if they refuse to listen to these, report it to the community; and if they refuse to listen to the community, treat them like a gentile or a tax collector.

In truth I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

In truth I tell you once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by God. For where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro/Andy backup) (Slides – Betty)**

This reading is often used to justify not listening to and even excluding dissenters and outliers. What attracts you, and what is hard for you, about seeking truth together rather than winning the dispute?

What issues call for a community response? How do we respond as Paul says, causing no harm and acting in love?

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

Now Charlotte Cook will read a reflection drawn from many resources.

**READING 3 - REFLECTION (Charlotte Cook)**

Sr. Carol Hoverman prays:

Oh God, be the weaver of our future.

Guide the threads that we hold in our hands,

For we see only part of the pattern,

Your design for our many-colored strands.

These readings are about community discernment: the threads that we hold in our hands, the patterns that make up our lives.

Jesus wants us to invent transformative ways of dealing with the conflict that arise in communities made up of many-colored strands. It isn’t the specific steps he details that matter. It’s the question of how to draw upon widening circles of community, grounded in love; it’s a question of how we seek reconciliation and truth together.

So how do we do meet this challenge? And what dispositions and skills do we need when the threads are hard to weave together? Paul reminds us that Agape love, a generous commitment to the good of the other, is the foundation. Jesus tells us to be flexible, creative, and patient in working through differences. We need to both strengthen bonds and loosen bonds.

What do we do when, after everything we’ve tried, it becomes painfully apparent that a person just isn’t a good fit for the community? Jesus wants us to remain in relationship even in disagreement. We are not to make a righteous condemnation or “cancel” them. The principles of restorative justice tell us that our goal is always healing for all parties, reconciliation, and relationship.

It is easy to first think about community conflict from the perspective of our partisan politics. But there are other places in which it is essential that we act as community seeking reconciliation. For instance, from now until October 4, many churches are celebrating the Season of Creation to honor God’s gift of Earth. The urgent need for reconciliation between humanity and Earth is a great example of how we have to depend on community discernment. We need to listen to one another, to the many divergent views about what to do. We **can’t** do it alone.

Sr. Mary McGlone says that “when we gather as community to read the signs of the times, we can count on the real presence of Christ among us. Then, we will be able to discern how to love one another and live as the prophets our world needs.”

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro/Andy backup) (Slides-Betty)**

When your family or your community is experiencing conflict, what is your deepest longing?

Think of a time when you or your community excluded someone. What could have been different?

What helps a community in conflict to create space for God to act?

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

Now Ann Jelen will lead us in sharing reflections.

**SHARING TIME (Ann Jelen)**

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. We welcome new voices, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening.

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)

[When there is silence, give an opportunity especially for new voices and voices that have not been heard today. ]

Thank you.

Now Anne Regan will lead us in prayer.

**COMMUNITY PRAYERS (Anne Regan)**

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

We have just listened to God’s word – in scripture, in each other, and in ourselves. What invitation do you hear? [Pause….]

God within us, help us to recognize your call and to act on it. For this we pray.

God who is the source of all, in this Season of Creation we thank you that you make us part of the glory of all you bring into being. May we cherish all of creation and do our part to honor the whole. For this we pray.

God who works in us, on this Labor Day weekend we thank you especially for workers who are unnoticed and underpaid, those who bring our mail and packages, those whose jobs put them in harm’s way. Give to them, and to all workers, dignity, satisfaction, and just treatment. For this we pray.

God who illuminates our world, as school begins we ask you to care tenderly for all teachers and students. Through your grace, may they thrive in every way during this time when “school” means something new. For this we pray.

God who unites us, bless Catholic sisters and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Give all of us vision and stamina as your prophetic community, especially to end racism and to welcome immigrants. For this we pray.

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

(Shared prayers)

God who loves us, we place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care. We will do all we can to put our prayers into action – while entrusting the outcome to you. Amen.

**OFFERING/STEWARDSHIP (Betty)**

Often, through our shared reflections, we discern a call to take some kind of action. The late John Lewis often quoted a West African proverb that says, “When you pray, move your feet.” How are we to move our feet this week? In response to the grace and goodness of God, how are we to share our abundance 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/Richard backup)**

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 (Suzie/Richard backup)**

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.

Your kingdom come. Your 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 (Suzie/Richard backup)**

Let us bow our heads and ask God’s blessing, using the words of John Wesley and Sister Nancy Sylvester.

“Do all the good you can,

By all the means you can,

In all the ways you can,

In all the places you can,

At all the times you can,

To all the people you can,

As long as ever you can.”

God, bless us with “openness to your work in us for the transformation of the world.” Amen.

**CLOSING SONG -- Will the circle be unbroken – Fr. Glen Willis (via Betty)**

Refrain: Will the circle be unbroken, by and by Lord, by and by?

Will the circle be unbroken, by and by Lord, by and by?

Sing a new song to the Lord now,

Sing it loud and sing it clear!

Sing a new song to the Lord now

For the whole wide world to hear!

Refrain

In the footsteps of those before us,

We approach a brand new day,

Goodness, kindness deep inside us,

Hand in hand we join to say...

Refrain

Whether fair or stormy weather

We shall set sail on the tide

Casting nets to bring salvation

With our Savior by our side.

Refrain

We have come here now together.

We have come from near and far.

Let us go forth now together!

Sing God’s praises to the stars!

Refrain

**RESOURCES:**

Mary McGlone, CSJ – NCRonline Resources for Sundays, 2020 and 2017:

<https://www.ncronline.org/sunday-resource/sept-6-2020-twenty-third-sunday-ordinary-time>

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/scripture-life/twenty-third-sunday-ordinary-time-0>

Mary Novak on Restorative Justice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=galwAtuLRCU>

LCWR Occasional Papers – Carole Schinnick, SSND (Summer 2014 – “Discernment”) and Anna Marie Reha, SSND (Winter 2018 – “At the Heart of Our Life”)

<https://lcwr.org/publications/occasional-papers>

Global Sisters Report Zoom Conversation: Sr. Nancy Sylvester and Gail DeGeorge (9/3/2020)

Network Catholic Social Justice Lobby on transformative conversations: <https://networkadvocates.org/advocacytoolbox/educate/transformativeconversations/>

Fr. Glen Willis – “Will the circle be unbroken”

<https://www.reverbnation.com/frglenwillissds/song/6065280-will-the-circle-be-unbroken>