**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, July 5, 2020**

“Separately and together, we must make God’s gospel visible.”

(Sister [Joan Chittister](http://www.joanchittister.org/articles/let-call-be-heard))

**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. Spill-over screen.
* 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?
* Thanks to Judy Sholes and Maryann Dolan for preparing today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to Reggie Ott for leading us in music.
* Thanks to readers today: Betty Thompson, Suzie De Quatro, Jim De Quatro, Sr. Grace Hartzog, and Stu Sklaam. If you’d like to read or prepare a script (solely or jointly) for a future Sunday liturgy, just get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Betty)**

Let’s move from getting here to being here. Settle into a comfortable position. Feel if there is any tightness in your body and let your muscles loosen. Notice your breath as it goes in and out. As you exhale, let tensions leave you. As you inhale, feel God’s love flowing into you. And now let’s take 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together….and one to create space for how God will lead us today.

Now Reggie Ott will lead us into our celebration with the hymn *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say.*

**OPENING I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say (Reggie Ott)**

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| I heard the voice of Jesus say,“Come unto Me and rest;Lay down, thou weary one, lay downThy head upon My breast.”I came to Jesus as I was,Weary and worn and sad;I found in Him a resting place,And He has made me glad.I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Behold, I freely give The living water; thirsty one, Stoop down, and drink, and live.” I came to Jesus, and I drank Of that life-giving stream; My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, And now I live in Him.I heard the voice of Jesus say,“I am this dark world’s Light;Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,And all thy day be bright.”I looked to Jesus, and I foundIn Him my Star, my Sun;And in that light of life I’ll walk,Till trav’ling days are done. . |

**GREETING (Judy)**

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

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

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Judy)**

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 remember that God is in love with us. Jesus promises us that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, Jesus himself is right here in the midst of us. In this extraordinary time, we realize how much we depend upon God and his help as we navigate in uncharted waters. More than ever, we are called to be gospel people…to do all we can to help create the Kingdom of God on earth. We are here together this morning to say yes to this call, and to find light for our next step. And now let us pray.

**GATHERING PRAYER (Judy)**

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 (Maryann)**

The readings for this Sunday speak to us in a way that resonates with the times in which we live.

We are faced with uncertainty, danger, inequality, unrest and fear. Methods used to seek power and impose attitudes, values and belief are often divisive and disrespectful. In the first reading today, the Prophet Zechariah tells the people to rejoice that a king comes to them.  Contrary to the expectation of a Messiah that is a warrior, he announces one who is humble and peaceful.

Centuries later Matthew writes his gospel to the Jewish converts who live under the burdensome yoke of the law. He begins with Jesus blessing the Father for what he chooses to do**.** Followers of Jesus have a different way of seeing and doing. Those who are open and filled with trust and awe are more likely to understand rather than those who are clever and learned.

Matthew then describes how Jesus is ready to help us with our burdens. According to Jan Richardson, the image of yoke (a harness for oxen) connotes bondage or servitude. In pictures, we usually see that yokes are shared by two of more beasts of burden. The fact that the burden is shared suggests a *connection* and some kind of *relationship*. Thus, those in the yoke *and* the one controlling the yoke work together to make the burden lighter and more manageable. The simplicity of the message is a challenge to us. There is no guarantee that there will be no more suffering, pain and injustice, but how do we manage the burdens?

Finally, in 1927 an American named Max Ehrmann wrote a poem titled *Desiderata*, that is filled with the qualities of the heart and soul that are to be desired. The poem is a reminder to “do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” As we hear the words of God proclaimed today, let us ponder the ways they speak to us individually.

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 Stu Sklamm will read from the book of Zechariah, and after each of the three readings, Jim De Quatro will offer questions for our reflection.

**READING 1: Zechariah 9: 9-10 (Stu Sklamm)**

 Rejoice heart and soul, daughter of Zion! Shout with gladness, daughter of Jerusalem! See now, your king comes to you; he is victorious, he is triumphant, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

He will banish chariots from Ephraim and horses from Jerusalem; the bow of war will be banished. He will proclaim peace for the nations. His empire shall stretch from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS** **(Jim)**

The first step in trying to bring about transformation in our world is to transform ourselves. What in me needs to be transformed?

Jesus modeled peaceful ways to transform people. In today’s world in which violent actions often dominate peaceful efforts to seek justice, what might need to be done to allow peaceful measures to bring about the changes that need to be made? What steps might we take to help the change process?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime after 2 minutes (Judy)**

Now Sr. Grace Hartzog will read from the book of Matthew.

 **READING 2: Matthew 11: 25-30 (Sr. Grace Hartzog)**

At that time Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.’

 Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'

 **REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)**

Why would Jesus prefer to reveal his messages to children rather than to the learned? What lesson does this provide us for having an impact on the many issues crying out for attention today?

Burdens are often imposed on us by matters that are beyond our control. However, because of the concurrent crises of Covid-19 and the urgent need to bring about racial justice, are we called to seek and embrace the yoke in some respect? How might I, personally, be called to take action?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime after 2 minutes (Judy)**

**READING 3: DESIDERATA, by Max Ehrmann (Judy)**

GO PLACIDLY amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons.

Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.

Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.

Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here.

And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)**

Speaking truth clearly and listening to others are hallmarks of prophets. Where are the prophets of today? Are we, or should we be prophets? How do I see myself? How does God see me?

What are the gifts you and this community bring in these times?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime after2 minutes) (Judy)**

**SHARING (Suzie)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings. Everyone’s individual reflections help us to glimpse the many ways God is among us.

If you would like to speak, you will need to unmute yourself on your phone or in Zoom. After you speak, please mute yourself again. If more than one person speaks at once, one will go first and the other will speak after that.

Who would like to begin our sharing?

(Sharing)

Thank you.

**INTENTIONS (Maryann)**

Today’s scripture describes Jesus as a humble peacemaker and teacher. He asks us to learn from him an tells us his yoke is easy and his burden light. In the words of Fr. Richard Rohr, “O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other’s burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our world.”

Our response will be: “Loving God, hear our prayer.”

* May Prophets, Peacemakers and Leaders throughout the world who seek paths of peace, reconciliation and unity be given the courage, conviction and support they need in the midst of discord and conflict. For this we pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.
* May we take on the yoke to work on behalf of all those suffering from hatred, racism and injustice so that they might experience God’s peace, compassion and mercy in unexpected ways. For this we pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.
* LCWR and Catholic sisters practice compassion, which is essential for the healing of our personal and collective wounds. May we all strive with the sisters for an intentional practice of compassion. For this we pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.
* May all people of faith and religious traditions strive to set aside differences and be an urgent and consistent voice of concern for our environment and God’s gift of creation. For this we pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.
* This weekend, as we celebrate of the birth of our country, may we commit anew to the principles of truth and justice, rooted in respect for the dignity and equality of all. For this we pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.

For what else should we pray? Please unmute yourself as you speak and end your petition with “For this we pray.”

(People speak)

Thank you.

 Knowing you, Loving God… knowing that you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these intentions that have been expressed and those that remain silent within our hearts. We offer these prayers in all the holy names of God. Amen.

 **CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Judy)**

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that you trust us to be your body in this world.

We offer you our lives. We give you thanks for your love. [Pause.]

We remember the night before Jesus died.

Jesus, who was having dinner with his friends,

looked at what was in front of him, the bread and the cup,

and he 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, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Maryann)**

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 (Judy)**

We are bread for one another.

Broken, we have gathered;

Nourished, may we reach out.

Let us now go forth in peace:

in communion with each other

to serve a hungry world. Amen.

**CLOSING SONG: And now, to conclude our service, let’s celebrate our country’s birthday, by joining with a group of young children in singing** [**America, the Beautiful**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89ogQqd8sCQ#action=share) **by Katherine Lee Bates. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89ogQqd8sCQ#action=share**

O beautiful for spacious skies
For amber waves of grain
[For purple mountain majesties](https://genius.com/Katharine-lee-bates-america-the-beautiful-lyrics#note-1181201)
Above the fruited plain!
[America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!](https://genius.com/Katharine-lee-bates-america-the-beautiful-lyrics#note-11451907)

O beautiful for pilgrim feet
Whose stern impassioned stress
A thoroughfare of freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
[America! America!
God mend thine every flaw
Confirm thy soul in self-control
Thy liberty in law!](https://genius.com/Katharine-lee-bates-america-the-beautiful-lyrics#note-3082451)

[O beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife
Who more than self their country loved
And mercy more than life!](https://genius.com/Katharine-lee-bates-america-the-beautiful-lyrics#note-11451746)
[America! America!
May God thy gold refine
Till all success be nobleness
And every gain divine!](https://genius.com/Katharine-lee-bates-america-the-beautiful-lyrics#note-11451831)

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!