**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, October 25, 2020,**

**30th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*“Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord,  
and my Father will love him and we will come to him.” (*[***JN 14:23***](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/14?23)*)*

**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 Thompson)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Joan and Stu Sklamm for preparing today’s communal prayer and to Stu and Reggie Ott for making our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Mia and Tim Brown, Sylvia and Kevin Lynch, and Joan and Stu Sklamm.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Suzie De Quattro)**

Settle into a comfortable position. Feel any tightness in your body and let your muscles loosen. Notice your thoughts and try to put aside those that distract you. 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 Stu Sklamm will lead us into our celebration.

**OPENING –**[***I***](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_t8O_PwPlKA) ***Have Loved You*** by Michael Joncas  **(Stu Sklamm)**

Refrain: I have loved you with an everlasting love,

I have called you and you are mine;

I have loved you with an everlasting love,

I have called you and you are mine.

V1: Seek the face of the Lord and long for Him:

He will bring you His light and His peace. Refrain

V2: Seek the face of the Lord and long for Him:

He will bring you His joy and His hope. Refrain

**GREETING (Joan Sklamm)**

Beloved Community, rejoice! *Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord, and my Father will love him and we will come to him. (*[*JN 14:23*](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/14?23)*)* Alleluia!

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

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Joan Sklamm)**

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 Suzie DeQuattro will lead us in prayer

**GATHERING PRAYER (Suzie DeQuattro)**

Loving God, 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.

**Stu Sklamm** will now introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Stu Sklamm)**

The first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. What does it mean to say the second commandment **is like it?** For to love your neighbor **AS yourself** means to know there is no separation between us. Just as there is no separation in God’s heart. Every one of us carries the Divine within us and therefore can never be separated from the love of God. *(Pauline Hovey, Catholic Women Preach, October 25, 2020)*

*( Slight pause)*

Kevin Lynch will now read from Exodus, Chapter 22, Verses 20 to 26.

**FIRST READING**  **(Kevin Lynch)** [**EX 22:20-26**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/exodus/22?20)

Thus says the LORD:  
"You shall not molest or oppress an alien,  
for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt.   
You shall not wrong any widow or orphan.   
If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me,  
I will surely hear their cry.   
My wrath will flare up, and I will kill you with the sword;  
then your own wives will be widows, and your children orphans.

"If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors among my people,  
you shall not act like an extortioner toward him  
by demanding interest from him.   
If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge,  
you shall return it to him before sunset;  
for this cloak of his is the only covering he has for his body.   
What else has he to sleep in?  
If he cries out to me, I will hear him; for I am compassionate."

*(Slight pause)*

We now offer the following questions for your reflection, after which we will pause for two minutes of silence.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Kevin Lynch)**

How do I feel when I hear the pleas of those who cry out?

To truly believe that “there is no separation between us,” what would need to shift within myself?

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

Tim Brownnow will read from Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians, Chapter 1, verses 5-8.

**SECOND READING**  **(Tim Brown)**  [**1 THES 1:5-8**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/1thessalonians/1?5)

Brothers and sisters:  
You know what sort of people we were among you for your sake.   
And you became imitators of us and of the Lord,  
receiving the word in great affliction, with joy from the Holy Spirit,  
so that you became a model for all the believers  
…For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth  
… in every place your faith in God has gone forth,  
so that we have no need to say anything.   
*( Slight pause)*

Stu Sklamm will now lead us in the Alleluia.

**ALLELUIA (Stu Sklamm) JN 14:23**

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord,  
and my Father will love him and we will come to him.

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Sylvia Lynch will now read from Matthew’s Gospel, Chapterr 22, verses 34-40.

**GOSPEL (Sylvia Lynch)** [**MT 22:34-40**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/22?34)

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees,  
they gathered together, and one of them,  
a scholar of the law tested him by asking,  
"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"   
He said to him,  
"You shall love the Lord, your God,  
with all your heart,  
with all your soul,  
and with all your mind.  
This is the greatest and the first commandment.  
The second is like it:  
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.   
The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

*( Slight pause)*

Joan Sklamm will now read a reflection for the 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time by Pauline Hovey of Catholic Women Preach.

**REFLECTION (Joan Sklamm)**

FOR THE THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

by Pauline Hovey at Catholic Women Preach

**I will surely hear their cry.**

For I have loved them with an everlasting love. Just as I love you. There is no separation in my heart.

This is how I hear God speak in this morning’s readings. God, who hears the cries of the afflicted, the oppressed, the abused, the brokenhearted. God who hears the cries of the suffering widows, the aliens on unfamiliar soil.

How I detest that word: *aliens*.

I have heard it so often with such negative connotations. To demean, to inflict hate and prejudice toward an entire group of people.

But the definition of alien simply is “*one belonging to a foreign country or nation*.”

And all of us know someone to whom that term applies. Even Jesus had no place to lay his head, born in Bethlehem of Judea, raised in Nazareth of Galilee, drifter along the seacoast towns of Capernaum and Magdala. Where did he belong?

Over these past several years I’ve come to know this traveling Jesus much more intimately. As I myself became the widow looking for a new place to lay her head. And most especially as I recognized his presence in the foreigners I accompanied at our southern border.

You see, for about five years I volunteered at houses of hospitality in El Paso where we received refugees and asylum seekers, so-called “aliens” vetted and released to us by ICE (immigration and customs enforcement)…. We accompanied these weary travelers on their journey to their family sponsors, to a place of safety, temporary freedom and the hope of life without the constant threat of rape, extortion, harm to their children or themselves.

My fellow volunteers and I … accompanied our guests with kindness and compassion, and the dignity and respect all human beings deserve. And they sometimes began to feel safe and relaxed enough to share their stories.

There were many widows among them. Strong women whose husbands had been murdered – sometimes in front of them – and try as they might, they couldn’t support their children when constantly being extorted by the local gang. Your money or your daughter. That was the usual threat.

So they would flee their homeland, taking very little possessions, if any.

But here’s the thing: these foreigners traveling with nothing or next to nothing – they were the imitators of Christ to me! The ones Paul refers to in his first letter to the Thessolonians in today’s second reading. These people – both women and men – had received the Word of God in great affliction, under terrible duress, nonexistent options, enduring cruel judgments and treatment along the way. Yet they carried the joy of the Holy Spirit within them, to us and to one another. Their faith journeyed with them.

They were – and are – the model for all believers that Paul speaks of. ... They enabled me to understand the meaning of the two greatest commandments Jesus teaches us to follow. To love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and all your strength. And to love your neighbor as yourself.

How do I love my neighbor AS myself? I came to understand that the kind of love Jesus is talking about doesn’t have the restrictions or boundaries we so often put on loving others.

This love is extravagant. It loves without distinction, without placing conditions on worthiness or place of origin. Let me give you a couple of examples:

One of our volunteer drivers was taking a couple of mothers and their children from our shelter to the bus station so they could travel on to their family sponsors. One of the women asked our driver if she could stop to exchange [her $20 bill]. …so she could give half of it to the woman she was traveling with – a woman she didn’t know: “…because I have $20 and she has nothing.”

 … We witnessed this kind of generosity many times.

A woman [who had recovered from an illness] agreed to take on a day of housekeeping from someone who’d called looking for a day laborer. [Returning] …after a long day of housecleaning, she had been given only $15 for her full day’s work, she gave $10 to our director to put aside for her and then she gave him the remaining $5 and told him to give it to someone who needed it more than she did.

Whenever I witness or hear about exchanges like this, I feel as though I am living in another world.

Who does this? Who gives half of what they have to a stranger? Or one-third of what they’ve earned when they don’t even know when they will next receive any income? “

***Who*** does this?  **Imitators of Christ.**

Such actions make no sense in “our” world with its desire for security and certainty. But in Jesus’ world of reckless, extravagant love, these actions are life-giving. And my “alien” brothers and sisters understand that.

…. Yes, the alien, the stranger, taught me what it means to be an imitator of Christ.

And, in meeting them and accompanying them, I understand why God says: “I will surely hear their cry.”

(Slight pause)

Mia Brownwill now offer questions for reflection followed by two minutes of silence.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Mia Brown)**

Considering the problems present in our world, in what ways do you feel challenged today to hear and respond more fully to the cries of the poor and the oppressed?

Thinking of the stories we have heard today, when have you experienced “reckless extravagant” love, as the giver or the receiver?

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

Mia Brown will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING TIME (Mia Brown)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings. That helps us to 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,

As you share your feelings, please use "I” or “me". And let's leave a bit of silence between speakers. A bridge of silence allows us to take in what was just said and gives others the chance to gather their feelings to share.

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. (Pause for 30 seconds.)

Now who would like to start our sharing? Remember to unmute yourself to speak and mute yourself again afterwards.

(Sharing)

Is there anyone else who would like to share? [Pause.]

Thank you.

Now Stu Sklamm will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY(Kevin Lynch)**

Humbly mindful of God’s mercy and powerful, transforming love, now let us pray for ourselves, our brothers and sisters, and for the good of our fragile world. Our response will be, **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

* For the good health, safety, and well-being of families and those who have no family, let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer.**
* For the wisdom to heed the advice of our scientists, researchers, and doctors regarding Covid-19 and for the development of a safe, effective, accessible, and affordable Covid-19 vaccine, let us pray**. Loving God, hear our prayer.**
* For the citizens and leaders of our divided nation, that we be blessed with courage, humility, honesty, integrity, compassion, responsibility, and respect for all in our communities, including those among us who have come from other countries. Let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer.**
* For our country, that we may experience a fair and peaceful election, let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer.**
* For the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and their member organizations as they implement programs to address systemic racism and white privilege, guide their communities through the difficult process of adjusting to declining membership and continue their service for the life of the world, let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer**.
* For the many priest missionaries who come to the United States from other countries, that they may find welcoming communities who help them adjust to our different culture and society, let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

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

(Shared prayers)

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

**OFFERTORY (Sylvia Lynch)**

As Pope Francis has said, prayer isn't about closing oneself in a room with God "to put makeup on your soul — that's not prayer, that's fake praying; to pray is to face God and allow yourself to be sent by him to help a brother or sister. The proving ground for prayer is concrete love for one's neighbor.”

Let us now take time to name within ourselves something we will offer to others in showing that I will love my neighbor as myself. [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 with our neighbors so we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION(Tim Brown)**

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 presence.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Mia Brown)**

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 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 (Stu Sklamm)**

While we keep ourselves muted, let us reach out our hands and bless each other:

May the peace of God  
which is beyond all understanding  
keep your hearts and minds  
in the knowledge and love of God  
and of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.  
May almighty God bless you,  
the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen!

**CLOSING SONG – *Gather Us In*** by Marty Haugen **(Reggie Ott)**

V1: Here in this place new light is streaming,

Now is the darkness vanished away.

See in this space our fears and our dreaming,

Brought here to you in the light of this day.

Gather us in the lost and forsaken,

Gather us in the blind and the lame;

Call to us now, and we shall awaken,

We shall arise at the sound of our name.

V2: We are the young—our lives are a myst’ry,

We are the old who yearn for your face,

We have been sung throughout all of histr’y,

Called to be light to the whole human race.

Gather us in the rich and the haughty,

Gather us in the proud and the strong;

Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,

Give us the courage to enter the song.

**RESOURCES:**

USCCB: <https://bible.usccb.org/>

Catholic Women Preach: <https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/10252020>

Blessing: <http://www.catholicdoors.com/prayers/english/p00013.htm>