**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for**

**26TH Sunday in Ordinary Time, September 27, 2020**

*“The urgency of this moment calls us to go to work in the vineyard where the weeds of hate and indifference choke the vitality of our souls.” Marge Kloose, SC*

**Readers: See Note at the bottom of this page.\*\***

**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: 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 THOMPSON)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to **JOAN and STU SKLAMM** for preparing today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to **STU and REGGIE** **OTT** for leading us in music.
* Thanks to readers today--**MIA and TIM BROWN, SYLVIA and KEVIN LYNCH, and JOAN and STU.**

**SETTLING IN (SUZIE DE QUATTRO)**

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 STU SKLAMM will lead us into our celebration with “There's a Wideness in God’s Mercy.”

***\*\*ALL READERS: Please read all text in your assigned section and through the introduction of the next reader.***

**OPENING HYMN (STU SKLAMM) There's a Wideness in God’s Mercy**

There' a wideness in God's mercy

Like the wideness of the sea;

There's a kindness in God's justice

Which is more than liberty.

There is plentiful redemption

In the blood that has been shed;

There is joy for all the members

In the sorrows of the head.

For the love of God is broader

Than the measures of our mind,

And the heart of the Eternal

Is most wonderfully kind.

If our love were but more simple

We should take him at his word,

And our lives would be thanksgiving

For the goodness of our Lord.

**GREETING (BETTY THOMPSON)**

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

**All:**  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 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 our midst. 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 out next step. And now let us pray.

**GATHERING PRAYER (MIA BROWN)**

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 (JOAN SKLAMM)**

Today our readings focus on God’s call to virtue and the promise of His forgiving grace. We will hear readings from Ezekiel, Paul’s epistle to the Philippians, and Matthew’s gospel as well as two reflections on the readings. Following each of the reflections, we will offer questions and pause for your silent consideration. There will be an opportunity for those who wish to speak to share your thoughts following the second reflection.

**Now KEVIN LYNCH will read from EZ 18:25-28.**

**FIRST READING:**  **(KEVIN LYNCH)** [**EZ 18:25-28**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/ezekiel/18?25)

Thus says the LORD:  
You say, "The LORD's way is not fair!"  
Hear now, house of Israel:  
Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?  
When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies,  
it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die.  
But if he turns from the wickedness he has committed,   
he does what is right and just.  
He shall preserve his life.  
Since he has turned away from all the sins that he has committed,  
he shall surely live, he shall not die.

**(Brief pause)**

Tim Brown will now read from Paul’s preaching to the PHILIPPIANS 2:1-5, after which Stu will read a reflection.

**READING 2: (TIM BROWN) PHILIPPIANS 2:1-5**

Brothers and sisters:  
If there is any encouragement in Christ,  
any solace in love,  
any participation in the Spirit,  
any compassion and mercy,  
complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love,  
united in heart, thinking one thing.  
Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory;  
rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves,  
each looking out not for his own interests,  
but also for those of others.

Have in you the same attitude  
that is also in Christ.

**(Brief pause)**

**FIRST REFLECTION (STU SKLAMM)**

…[T]he lessons today do more than just admonish us to act on our faith. They give us some insights into why that is often so difficult even for people of faith.… Ezekiel reminds us that we are tempted to think about our relationship in a legalistic sense. But God was telling us long before Jesus came to tell us again, it isn’t about how little we sin. The message here is that God will always forgive us, if we repent and change our ways.…

It is certainly true that the Lord’s ways are not our ways, or we would not have so much difficulty with the vastness of God’s love and forgiveness.… [W]e so often think that God will be pleased with us if we try to live upright lives, but we don’t always follow through with that. And even when we do, that leads us to worldly pride, and it makes us judgmental of others. That leads us away from God. Instead we are to acknowledge our own failures and remain humble in following the Lord’s ways. That leads us to be compassionate to others, just as the Lord is compassionate to us.

…[F]ollowing Jesus is about learning how to live humbly, regarding others as more important than ourselves, and to do nothing out of selfishness.  We are to look out for others’ interests and not our own.

(Daily Reflection [of Creighton University's Online Ministries](http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online.html), July 27, 2020, by Barbara Dilly, Creighton University's Department of Sociology and Anthropology)

Timwill now present questions for your silent reflection.

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION (TIM BROWN)**

How have you experienced tension between worldly pride or judgmental thinking and living a virtuous life? [Brief pause]

How can humility help you to bridge the racial divisions in our country? [Brief pause.]

We will now pause in SILENCE for two minutes of private reflection, after which you will hear the sound of a chime .

**SILENCE** (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) **(BETTY THOMPSON)**

**ALLELUIA (John** [**10:27**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/10?27)**) (STU, REGGIE OTT;**

**ALL RESPOND WITH REGGIE, BUT MUTED)**

**(STU) Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia**!

**REGGIE)** **Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

**(STU)** **My** **sheep hear my voice, says the Lord;**

**I know them, and they follow me.**

**(REGGIE).** **Alleluia, alleluia , alleluia!**

**Stu:** Now SYLVIA LYNCH will read from [Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 21, verses 28 to 32](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/21?28), after which JOAN will read a reflection and then TIM will offer questions for your personal reflection;

**GOSPEL : (SYLVIA LYNCH)** [**MT 21:28-32**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/21?28)

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people:  
"What is your opinion?  
A man had two sons.  
He came to the first and said,  
'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.'  
He said in reply, 'I will not, '  
but afterwards changed his mind and went.  
The man came to the other son and gave the same order.  
He said in reply, 'Yes, sir, ‘but did not go.  
Which of the two did his father's will?"  
They answered, "The first."  
Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you,  
tax collectors and prostitutes  
are entering the kingdom of God before you.  
When John came to you in the way of righteousness,  
you did not believe him;  
but tax collectors and prostitutes did.  
Yet even when you saw that,  
you did not later change your minds and believe him."

**(Brief pause)**

**SECOND REFLECTION: Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, (JOAN SKLAMM)**

MARGE KLOOSE, SC , SEPTEMBER 27, 2020

In today’s gospel, two sons are sent by their father to**… Go out and work in the vineyard today.** …The journey to the vineyard requires us to leave behind our real or imagined security, comfort, and control.

…An ancient Navajo proverb reminds us, “a rocky vineyard does not need a prayer but a pickax.” Our world today needs us to pick up the pickax of compassion. By choosing the transforming work of relationship healing and tending, we chip away the boulders of hate and neglect that smother the tender shoots of unity.

We don’t go to the vineyard to chisel it in our image. We go to compassionately participate in the creative energy of God, in whose image we all have been given life.

Our compassion needs to be practical and inclusive. So we might ask ourselves, whose inner-resources, long ignored, need to be heard and embraced at this time? Can we find the collective humility to relinquish oversight of the vineyard to these precious, patient others? How do we listen to the pain, the hopes, the vision, the despair, of those who have not mattered?

…In our vineyard today, the sin of racism is destroying the integrity of our humanity. In the vineyard of our relationships, what must we change about our biases, our own insecurities, our limited understanding of what it means to be human?…

“Go out and work in the vineyard today.” Feel this command within your own skin.

The vineyard is the place of communion, where mercy, healing, justice and equality consume the destructive, choking weeds of relational sin.

Why do we settle for a world in which shame and deprivations of every sort are justified?

“Go out and work in the vineyard today… go with the attitude of Christ.”

Take the path God opens before you. Believe that as living grace you can enter the vineyard as renewing justice and reconciling Love.

Go because your integrity will grind down the rocks smothering the vines.

Go because the desperate cries for justice from every corner must be heard by a tender heart…your heart.

Go because shame casts shadows into our collective consciousness with unrelenting cruelty.

Go because the web of life into which we are woven is fraying and knotting into tangles of ungodly complexity because of human excess and unholy desire.

Go with the humility of pick-axed rock, a particle of grace through which roots can burrow deeply and shoots can grow toward sunlight.

Go with the simplicity of one whose intimacy with God is visible to a hurting world.

Go with the consciousness of God’s justice, God’s fairness, God’s integrity.

Go with open arms as the incarnation of Christ’s Love for our world.

(https//www.catholicwomenpreach/09272020: Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Marge Kloose, SC.)

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (TIM BROWN)**

Our reflection questions will be followed by two minutes of silence, followed by the sound of a chime.

How have you in some ways settled for a world in which shame and deprivation of every sort are justified? [Brief pause.]

What feelings “within your own skin” move you to go out to work in the vineyard? [Brief pause]

How can you, with humility, bring a particle of grace to our world through which roots can burrow deeply and shoots can grow toward sunlight?

**SILENCE** (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) **(BETTY THOMPSON)**

**TIM BROWN:** Now Mia will lead us in sharing.

**SHARING (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 Tim will lead us in prayer.

**INTENTIONS (TIM BROWN)**

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 all families and those who have no family, let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

For the empowerment of our scientists, researchers, and doctors to practice fortitude, knowledge, wisdom, and integrity in search of COVID-19 treatments and vaccines, 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 courage to work toward communities where mercy, healing, justice and equality choke the weeds of relational sin, let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

For our divided nation, please bless our citizens and leaders with courage, humility, honesty, integrity, compassion, responsibility and respect for all in our communities so that we may experience a fair and peaceful election, let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

For abundant blessings for all first responders, all medical personnel, and all essential workers who put their lives a risk during this pandemic, let us pray. **Loving God, 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 **“Let us pray.”** All respond, **“Loving God, hear our prayer.”**

(People speak.)

Thank you.

We place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care, and we entrust the outcome to you.

**OFFERTORY (MIA BROWN)**

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 treasure so that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Kevin will now lead our Celebration of Communion; then SYLVIA, will lead the Lord’s Prayer.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (KEVIN LYNCH)**

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 (SYLVIA LYNCH)**

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 (STU SKLAMM)**

Let us now go forth in peace:

in communion with each other

and offering communion to a hungry world. Amen.

**All:** May the Lord bless us and keep us.

May the Lord shine his light upon us.

May the Lord be gracious to us

and give us peace. Amen.

Reggie will now lead us in our closing hymn, Amazing Grace.

**CLOSING SONG: (REGGIE OTT)** **Amazing Grace**

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound,

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,

Was blind, but now I see.

"Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,

And grace my fears relieved;

How precious did that grace appear

The hour I first believed!

The Lord has promised good to me,

His word my hope secures;

He will my shield and portion be

As long as life endures.