**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for April 18, 2021**

**The Third Sunday of Easter**

*“Peace be with you.”*

**CHECK-IN** and then Betty mutes everyone.

**WELCOME (Betty Thompson)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Mary Ott for preparing today’s communal prayer and to Linda Donaldson and Reggie Ott for providing our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Betty Thompson, Suzie DeQuattro, Kevin Lynch, Jim DeQuattro, Alicia Urban, Ann Jelen, Richard McGinnis, Peggy Thompson, Marie McCarthy, and Bob Gallagher.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN**

Let’s quiet ourselves so we can be attentive to what God hopes for us today. Notice your breath as it goes in and out…. Let it slow and deepen… and slowly fill you with the peace of Christ. We begin with 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together… and one to welcome in the Spirit who never leaves us.

Now Linda Donaldson will lead us in “Christ the Lord is Risen Today.”

**OPENING SONG (Linda)**

**Christ the Lord is Risen Today -- by Charles Wesley**

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia! **(Betty:** Begin Slide 1.)

**GREETING (Suzie DeQuattro)**

Let us rejoice, for Jesus Christ is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!

All: Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

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.”

**GATHERING PRAYER**

Over and over during this season we hear Jesus say, “Peace be with you.”

Jesus, teach us how to be a community of contagious peace –

to put on your mind and your heart

so that we see each other and all that is with your eyes of love. Amen.

(**Betty:** End Slide 1.)

Mary Ott will now introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Mary)**

The readings for the third Sunday of Easter tell us how to live following the death and resurrection of Jesus. In particular they tell us to avoid sin, and what to do if we have sinned.

The meaning of “sin” has changed over the centuries. Recognizing your own understanding might be helpful. Perhaps we can think of sin as our personal actions or inactions, as well as our participation in systems that cause harm to others. The Church says that sin is “a failure in genuine love for God and for one’s neighbor,” with neighbor understood as all people and all creation.

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Peter tells the Jews who demanded that Pilate crucify Jesus that they should repent and be converted so that their sins would be taken away.

In the reading from John’s First Epistle we are told to keep the commandments but if we sin Jesus will be an Advocate with the Father. This indicates that sinners should pray to Jesus to intercede for them so that their sins will be forgiven.

In the third reading from Luke’s Gospel, Jesus appears to the apostles and disciples to show them that he is the Jesus who was crucified. This is the appearance referred to in last week’s Gospel reading, when Thomas was not present. Jesus explains how he is the fulfillment of the scriptures. Then Jesus says that following his death and resurrection repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to the whole world.

(Slight pause)

Now Kevin Lynch will read from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 3, verses 13-15 and 17-19, followed by questions and silence for reflection. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1**  **(Kevin)**

Peter said to the people: “The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus whom you handed over and denied in Pilate’s presence when he had decided to release him. You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses. Now I know, brothers, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did; but God has thus brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer. Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away.”

(Pause) (Betty, put up 1st slide of questions and take down after two minutes of silence.)

**QUESTIONS (Jim)**

What does sin mean to you in your life and in your interactions in the world?

What conversion in your life would help you follow Jesus more fully?

**SILENT REFLECTION** (**Betty**: Start Slide 2, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.)

(Mary) Now Alicia Urban will read from John’s First Letter, chapter 2, verses 1-3.

**READING 2 (Alicia)**

My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world. The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments.

(**Mary**) As Sr. Mary M. McGlone has written:

“Today's reading from 1 John is particularly susceptible to being misinterpreted. John tells us, ‘We have an advocate with the Father. … He is expiation for our sins.’ This has most often been explained by portraying Christ as our relentless defense lawyer and the savior who pacifies God's justifiable wrath by paying the price of human sin.

That point of view springs from and reinforces the insistence that crime deserves punishment and that people must pay for their sins. … Theologically, this thinking supports the idea that Jesus paid God off for human sin, so we are saved. The trouble with that theory is that it is, at best, political or social, not theological. It flows from a theory of retributive justice and recompense for the offended. Applied to God, it demotes our divine lover to the level of a rule-bound authoritarian. Under that lens, this Scripture promulgates idolatry, portraying God in conformity with narrow, even petty, human norms. … we would do better to think about God in light of what we know from Jesus. Then, we begin with an image of the Father who longs to draw humanity into the realm of pure love. Interpreted in this light, we would understand 1 John to explain: ‘Jesus is the advocate God sends to sinners. He pleads with us on behalf of God who has limitless love and desire to be with us — and not only us, but the whole world.’”

**QUESTIONS (Jim)**

How does the common idea that Jesus had to die to pay for our sins still resonate within you?

Thinking about Mary McGlone’s words, how do you feel about Jesus as an advocate to you?

**SILENT REFLECTION** (**Betty**: Start Slide 3, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.)

(**Mary**) Now Ann Jelen will read from the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter 24, verses 36-48.

**READING 3 (Ann)**

[While the two disciples from Emmaus were speaking to the apostles and their companions about encountering Jesus], he stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost.

Then he said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts?

Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.

Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.” And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them. He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION (Jim)**

Jesus appeared to the apostles and their companions. In what way, if any, does it make a difference to you that both women and men were there?

What does repentance for the forgiveness of sins mean in your life?

**SILENT REFLECTION** (**Betty**: Start Slide 4, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.)

(Mary) Richard McGinnis will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Richard)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in your heart this morning as you have reflected upon our reading and music. We welcome everyone who wants to speak, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. (Longish pause)

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

(Sharing)

[If there is silence more than about 30 seconds before anyone speaks:] Take whatever quiet you need before you speak.

[If there is extended silence during the sharing:] Is there anyone else who would like to share?  (Pause.)

[Stop by about 11:20.]

Thank you.

(Mary) Now Peggy Thompson will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY(Peggy)**

We know God loves us and all creation. With confidence we offer our prayers. Let’s pause to notice the prayers that rise in us now. (Pause)

Our response will be: Holy One, bring us peace.

For repentant sinners that they may be converted. For this we pray. Holy One, bring us peace.

For the Leadership Conference of Women Religious as they ask not simply what they are to do for your kingdom, but how they are to be your presence. For this we pray. Holy One, bring us peace.

For those who are marginalized, unheard, and vulnerable, and for your whole creation. For this we pray. Holy One, bring us peace.

For those mourning the deaths of people from Covid and from violence. For this we pray. Holy One, bring us peace.

For peace in the world. For this we pray. Holy One, bring us peace.

 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 (Betty)**

In this Easter season, we celebrate the amazing gift of Christ among us. What does it mean to offer yourself to God in gratitude? In the bright light of Easter, what call do you see for yourself this week? [Pause.]

Let us pray. Generous God, Creative Spirit, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Marie McCarthy)**

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 and among 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 and said, “… as I have done for you, you should also do.” [John 13:15]

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 in our world. (Pause.)

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

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Bob Gallagher)**

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 your 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 do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

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

**FINAL BLESSING (Mary)**

We place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care, and we entrust the outcome to you. Give us hearts attentive to your voice when you say to us, ”Peace be with you.” Amen.

Now Reggie Ott will lead us in song.

 (**Betty**: Start Slide 5.)

**CLOSING SONG** **(Reggie)**

**Make Me a Channel of Your Peace**

Make me a channel of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love,
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord,
And where there's doubt, true faith in You.

Make me a channel of Your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope,
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Make me a channel of Your peace.
It is pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving to all men that we receive,
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

**(Betty**: Stop slide.)

**Resources**

Mary M. McGlone, “April 18, 2021: Third Sunday of Easter.” www.ncronline.org/sunday-resource/april-18-2021-third-sunday-easter.

Slides 1, 2, 3, and 4 and image of a lily. Photos by Mary D. Ott.

Slide 5. “Lilies I,” pronto plate lithograph by Mary D. Ott, © 2009.