**Solidarity with Sisters**

 **Communal Prayer for Sunday, September 5, 2021**

***Let’s open our hearts to allow God to work in our daily lives.***

**HELLOs** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Suzie DeQuattro)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Mary Dolmage and Cecilia Estrada who prepared this communal prayer.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Sister Jennie Lechtenberg, Sister Jo’Ann DeQuattro, Cheryl Dowden, Ann Masters, Lynn Bufka, Sister Marie McCarthy, Betty Thompson, Judy Sholes, Frances Beard, and Kate Finan.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Cecilia Estrada)**

We are here to be together in the presence of God. Let’s pause to quietly center ourselves to let the Spirit of God enter deep within. Notice your breath as it goes in and out…. We inhale slowly to deepen our awareness of those around us, we exhale and release any distractions.

May the peace of Christ enter our souls as we take three more deep and slow breaths.

One to be here… one to be together… and one to know the Spirit who never leaves us.

Our opening song is “Open My Eyes” performed by Jesse Manibusan.

**OPENING SONG – “Open My Eyes” by Jesse Manibusan (Betty plays youtube at 1.5 speed)** <https://youtu.be/eo6gZAUuQ3E>

Open my eyes, Lord,
Help me to see your face
Open my eyes, Lord,
Help me to see.

Open my ears, Lord,
Help me to hear your voice.
Open my ears, Lord,
Help me to hear.

Open my heart, Lord.
Help me to love like you/
Open my heart, Lord.
Help me to love.

And the first shall be last,
And our eyes are opened,
And we'll hear like never before,
And we'll speak in new ways,
And we'll see God's face

In places we've never known.

I live within you,
Deep in your heart, O Love.
I live within you.
Rest now in me.

**GREETING (Sister Jennie Lechtenberg)**

Beloved Community, rejoice!The Spirit of Christ is alive in us! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**All:** Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Sister Jennie Lechtenberg)**

We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as the people of God and the body of Christ. Today we hope for joy in the Spirit, and for capacity to share the Gospel. We believe that the Spirit will give us light for our next steps.

And now let us pray.

**GATHERING PRAYER (Sister Jennie Lechtenberg)**

Holy One, fill us with your Holy Spirit and inflame our hearts with love and compassion. Make us attentive to the needs of others that we may show them kindness and care. Make us instruments of your mercy and peace that we may help others find healing and wholeness in you. Amen

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Mary Dolmage and Cecilia Estrada)**

**Mary**: This Sunday we will explore how you find your way in the face of the enormous

needs of people worldwide and nearby. Think for a moment about how you come to

understand your purpose in life and how you discern what actions you want to take. (pause)

As we contemplate the vast amount of work to be done, we are sustained by our faith that God is present alongside those who come together to work for justice. We find strength and solace in the sayings of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who teaches and encourages us by saying, “I am with you always.”

**Cecilia:** Openness to God makes us open towards our sisters and brothers and

towards an understanding of life as a joyful task to be accomplished in a spirit of

solidarity.

**Mary:** In today’s gospel the story of Jesus healing the deaf person shows that Jesus

was opening people’s ears to the word of God. God works in our hearts, our minds, and even our very ears, inspiring us to receive and to give.

**Cecilia:** When we are faced with challenging situations, may our prayer be that our

hearts be opened to following God’s will.

Miracles still happen today…will we be open to seeing them?

*(Slight pause)*

We will now be present for the reading of Isaiah 35: 4 – 7, 10 on YouTube, followed by questions and silence for reflection. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1 Isaiah 35: 4 -7, 10 (Betty Thompson)**

[**https://youtu.be/fWiKNmGw5r8**](https://youtu.be/fWiKNmGw5r8) **(begin at time mark 1:35)**

Betty will read the words as they appear onscreen.

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 1** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Judith Sholes)**

What fears have you been able to put aside because God helped you find renewed hope?

What are the values that motivate you to turn your deserts into streams of water?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Shares slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**Cecilia:** Now Sister Jo’Ann De Quattro will read a poem from E.E. Cummings.

**READING 2** “i thank You God for most this amazing” by E. E. Cummings

 **(Sister Jo’Ann De Quattro)**

i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun’s birthday; this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

*(Slight pause)*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 2** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Judith Sholes)**

What does it mean to you to be in awe of all of God’s wonders?

What comes to your heart when you hear the words, “(now the ears of my ears awake and now the eyes of my eyes are opened)?”

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**  **(Betty:** Share slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**Cecilia:** Now Cheryl Dowden will read from the Gospel of Mark Chapter 7:31 - 37.

**READING 3 Mark 7:31-37 (Cheryl Dowden)**

 Jesus left the region of Tyre and returned by the way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Ten Cities.

 Some people brought an individual who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and begged Jesus to lay hands on that person. Jesus took the afflicted one aside, away from the crowd, put his fingers into the deaf ears and, spitting, touched the mute tongue with his saliva. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and, with a deep sigh, said, “Ephphatha!” – that is, “Be opened!” At once the deaf ears were opened and the impediment cured; the one who had been healed began to speak plainly.

 Then Jesus warned them not to tell anyone; but the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it. Their amazement went beyond all bounds: “He has done everything well! He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!”

*(Slight pause)*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 3** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Judith Sholes)**

Jesus shows great compassion in today’s gospel. What does it mean to you to show compassion?

How do you feel when you hear people pray for God's intervention and some are healed, and some are not?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**  **(Betty or Other:** Share slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**(Cecilia)**  Lynn Bufka will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Lynn Bufka)**

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 breath of silence between speakers. A bridge of silence allows us to take in what was just said and let it influence what we may want to share.]

So, let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. [Long pause.]

Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute again afterwards.

Who would like to begin our sharing?

(Sharing)

Thank you.

Now Ann Masters will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Ann Masters)**

We know that God alone is enough for us. At the same time, we have heard Paul say that “if there is anything you need, pray for it.” So now we bring what is in our hearts to God. Our response will be: Spirit of Love, hear our prayer.

Holy One, touch our ears and tongues so that we will be open to listening to the needs of others and be bold enough to speak your message of love, compassion, and mercy. For this we pray. Spirit of Love, hear our prayer.

God among us, animate 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 love. For this we pray. Spirit of Love, hear our prayer.

Creator, bless all who labor as our nation celebrates Labor Day tomorrow. May we work together as members of one body, using the gifts and abilities you have given us to faithfully love and serve one another. For this we pray. Spirit of Love, hear our prayer.

As the Jewish people begin their High Holy Days, may they be blessed and nourished in their celebration of faith. For this we pray. Spirit of Love, hear our prayer.

Now let’s remember the feelings and prayers that arose in us as we shared reflections, and the prayers we carry with us. *[Pause.]*

Now, for what else shall we pray? Please remember to unmute and mute yourself.

(People speak.) Spirit of Love, hear our prayer.

Thank you.

O God, we give you all our prayers, spoken and unspoken. We will do all that we can to put our prayers into action – while entrusting the outcome to you. Amen.

 **OFFERTORY (Sister Marie McCarthy)**

In these months after Pentecost, we celebrate the amazing fact that the Spirit of God lives in us now and at every moment. What does it mean to offer yourself to God in gratitude? Is there an old or new call that you will commit to 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 (Frances Beard)**

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.”

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the wine,

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.]

Holy One, give us confidence in you and in one another.

Make us your bread of abundance.  Make us your wine of joy.

Let even our fragments be plenty to share.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Kate Finan)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands,

to pray in harmony with Christians throughout the world:

***All (muted):*** Our Father, Our Mother, 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 (Cecilia Estrada)**

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

 Let us now go forth in peace, keeping our ears open, and our tongues

proclaiming the wonders of our God

so that in union with each other we may offer communion

to a hungry world. Amen.

Please join in singing our closing song, “O Bless the Lord”.

**CLOSING – “O Bless the Lord” by John Michaels (Betty play** <https://youtu.be/SzYYs63Z_nM> )

Refrain:

O bless the Lord, the God of our salvation,

Rock of strength and a refuge sure,

O bless the Lord, the God of every nation,

Over all the earth.

O bless the Lord, highest heavens above!

O bless the Lord, glorify his name!

Sun in the day, moon and the stars in the night,

Worship and praise! Refrain

Let all the earth sing with joy to the Lord!

All the seas, creatures of the deep,

Mountains and hills, birds and beasts in the field,

Worship and praise! Refrain

Let all the nations on Earth bless the Lord

For the Lord governs all the earth!

Let all the rulers on Earth bless the Lord,

Worship and praise. Refrain

**Resources:**

[Open My Eyes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rj-jJM7ODIY) Artist: Jesse Manibusan – Album: Never Too Young – By Request Licensed to YouTube by The Orchard Music (on behalf of spiritandsong.com). Hexacorp (music publishing), Adorando Brazil, Capitol CMG Publishing, and 9 Music Rights Societies

O Bless the Lord – John Michaels (Lyrics HQ)