**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer**

**4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, January 30, 2022**

Love never fails.

Love does not come to an end.

1 Corinthians 13:8

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

**WELCOME (Lynn Bufka)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* I had the joy of preparing this communal prayer.
* Thanks to Reggie Ott for our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Pat and Greg Campbell, Charlotte Cook, Mary Dolmage, Cecilia Estrada, Marilyn Voigt, Peggy Thompson, Judy Sholes, Jim and Suzie DeQuattro and Kathy Linaberry.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Lynn Bufka)**

Let your breath bring you into quiet so you can be attentive to each other and to the Spirit. 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 know the Spirit who never leaves us.

Now we will sing “Before the Sun Burned Bright” led by Reggie Ott.

**OPENING – Before the Sun Burned Bright**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOLYDQCrcWg>

(Refrain) Before the sun burned bright and rivers flowed

I called you each by name to share My home.

No longer be afraid, I am your God.

My love will never end, Alleluia.

V1 Though you have sent me, Lord, to every land, I can’t find words to speak Your ways of love.

V2 The Lord reached out his hand and touched my tongue. I give My words to you to speak My love.

V3 My hand will bring you words, so speak them loud. I am your Lord and God, the Faithful One.

**GREETING (Lynn Bufka)**

Beloved Community, rejoice!Emanuel is alive in us! Alleluia! Alleluia!

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

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Lynn Bufka)**

We gather because we experience the courageous love of God. We are grateful for God’s embrace of us every day. As we celebrate this goodness in our lives, we pray that our time together will help us be instruments of goodness in the lives of others and action in the world around us. Open our hearts and minds to ways we can demonstrate the love, compassion and call of God to those nearby, in our communities, and around the world. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Kathy Linaberry)**

 Today’s Old Testament reading and today’s Gospel fit together- both are about being called, being appointed prophet, acting yet knowing it will not be easy. These two readings echo each other and challenge us in many ways in our lives here and now.

 But the second reading from the First Letter to the Corinthians seems to run a different course. It is the very familiar reading about love that we often hear at weddings. Why is this reading here today? It is so we will know how to act; how to respond to any situation; how to be prophet. With love, we say what is difficult and speak the truth of God.

*(Slight pause)*

Now Marilyn Voigt will read from the first chapter of Jeremiah, followed by questions and silence for reflection. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1**  **(Marilyn Voigt)** Jeremiah 1: 4, 17, 19

The word of Yahweh was addressed to me, saying:
            Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
                        before you were born I dedicated you,
                        I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations.

So now brace yourself for action. Stand up and tell them all I command you.

They will fight against you but shall not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you- it is Yahweh who speaks.

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause between questions.]* **(Peggy Thompson)**

What does it feel like to know that Yahweh says to you “I knew you before I formed you?”

To whom does God command you to speak? What is it God wants you to say?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Share slide 1, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Lynn: Now Jim and Suzie DeQuattro will read from First Corinthians followed by some thoughts on love from Ted Ancelet.

**READING 2 -** **1 Corinthians 13:4–8a (ESV)** **(Jim and Suzie De Quattro)**

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

Love is the common denominator in how we relate—to God, to others, to ourselves. As followers of Christ, love is our trademark. Love **embraces** patience, kindness, truth, resilience, faith, hope, endurance and perseverance and love **resists** envy, boasting, arrogance, rudeness, selfishness, anger, resentment, wrongdoing.

We are empowered with this framework of love to respond. Sometimes we will need to do things that are out of our comfort zone; sometimes we will need to *not* do things that feel natural to us. In both situations, love empowers us to respond beyond our feelings so we may impart life to others.

*(Slight pause)*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **(Peggy Thompson)**

What does it mean to have ‘love empower us to respond beyond our feelings’?

When you feel righteous anger, how do you consider "what love embraces" and "what love resists"?

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

Lynn: Greg and Pat Campbell will read the Gospel interspersed with reflections from Sr. Louise Lears, first presented 3 years ago.

**READING 3 (Pat and Greg Campbell)**

We pick up Luke’s Gospel where we left off last week.

Jesus began speaking in the synagogue, saying:
“Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”
And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.  They also asked, “Isn’t this the son of Mary and Joseph?”

This must have been an affirming moment for Jesus and he could have stopped there. Yet, Jesus felt compelled to continue, to speak a hard truth, and when he did the same people who had been amazed at his gracious words, …wanted to kill him.

What happened between the peak of amazement and the edge of violence? What truth did he speak to fuel such anger? Let’s listen to the next part of the Gospel

Jesus said to them “Undoubtedly you will say to me ‘Do here in your home town the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.’”
Indeed, I ask you to remember:
there were many widows in Israel when a severe famine spread over the entire land.
Yet Elijah was only sent to a widow in Zarephath.
Recall too that there were many lepers in Israel
during the time of Elisha the prophet;
yet not one of them was cleansed, except Naaman the Syrian.”
When the people in the synagogue heard this,
they were all filled with fury.
They dragged Jesus out of the town,
intending to hurl him over the edge of a cliff.

Basically, in a few verses, Jesus exposed the prejudices and biases of those gathered in the synagogue. Jesus was saying, “When I talk about God freeing the oppressed and giving sight to the blind, I’m talking about God blessing the people you avoid, the people you don’t want to be near, those you call ‘enemies’.” No wonder the people in the synagogue were so angry they wanted to kill Jesus.

Yet, Jesus was doing just what he was anointed to do. He was opening the eyes of those before him to their racism and nationalism. He was trying to set them free of their captivity, reminding them that God’s love extends to everyone – and so should theirs- and ours.

*(Slight pause)*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **(Peggy Thompson)**

How are you challenged to respond when Christianity is being used to define and defend nationalism?

Whose voice are you ignoring because it makes you uncomfortable?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**  **(Betty** Share slide 3, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Lynn: Charlotte Cook will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Charlotte Cook)**

 **(Pat and Greg Campbell put questions in Chat.)**

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. And let's leave a breath of silence between speakers which allows us to take in more fully what was just said.

We begin in silence as we gather our reflections. *[Long pause.]*

Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute again afterwards. Who would like to begin?

(Sharing)

*[Let sharing continue for about 20 minutes ending by 11:20.]*

Thank you.  We have to stop now, and we can continue after the final song, as we often do.

Now Cecilia Estrada will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Cecilia Estrada)**

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.

God who has called us, help us to each hear our unique call and to respond to that call in love. 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.

God without boundaries, we lift up our friends and communities of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese and many other heritages as they celebrate Lunar New Year. We desire an end to anti-Asian hate and health and goodness for all. For this we pray: Spirit of Love, hear our prayer.

God of all, open our ears to hear what we have ignored, open our eyes to see what we have tried to turn away from, release us from what holds us captive. 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 also 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 (Mary Dolmage)**

In these weeks after Christmas, we celebrate the amazing fact that the Holy One is with us and lives in us now and at every moment. We offer ourselves to God in gratitude for having been chosen, just as we are, to be God’s Living Sign in our world. What special call will I live out during the coming 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 (Judy Sholes)**

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 Earth and the 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, make us your bread of abundance.  Make us your wine of joy.

Let even our fragments be plenty to share.

Amen.

**OUR UNIVERSAL PRAYER (Betty Thompson)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands to pray in harmony with our family throughout the world:

***All (muted):***

Heavenly Father, heavenly Mother, Holy and blessed is your true name. We pray for your reign of peace to come, We pray that your good will be done, Let heaven and earth become one. Give us this day the bread we need, Give it to those who have none. Let forgiveness flow like a river between us, From each one to each one. Lead us to holy innocence Beyond the evil of our days — Come swiftly Mother, Father, come. For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy: Forever your name is All in One. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Lynn Bufka)**

We are appointed God’s living sign in our world. As we end our prayer, may the way of God direct us; may the love of God go with us to live this love in our damaged world. Amen.

Now Reggie Ott will lead us in singing “God Has Chosen Me.”

**CLOSING – God Has Chosen Me (Reggie Ott)**

V1 God has chosen me, God has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. God has chosen me, God has chosen me to bring new sight to those searching for light; God has chosen me, chosen me.

(Refrain) And to tell the world that God’s kingdom is near, to remove oppression and break down fear, yes, God’s time is near, God’s time is near, God’s time is near.

V2 God has chosen me, God has chosen me to set alight a new fire. God has chosen me, God has chosen me to bring to birth a new kingdom on earth. God has chosen me, chosen me.

V3 God is calling me, God is calling me in all whose cry is unheard. God is calling me, God is calling me to raise up the voice with no power or choice. God is calling me, calling me.

**RESOURCES**

Inspiration for the second reading:

<https://bethany.org/resources/love-embraces-and-resists>

Additional reflection questions for **1 Corinthians 13:4–8a (ESV)**

How does thinking about what ‘love embraces’ and what ‘love resists’ enhance your hearing of this very familiar reading?

Acting with love, how do you balance when to be patient with when to push urgently?

Inspiration for the third reading:

The reflection of Louise Lears, SC, on today’s Gospel is from Catholic Women Preach, February 3, 2019.

<https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/02032019>

The universal prayer of Jesus from Parker J. Palmer

<https://www.elkgroveumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Alternative-versions-of-the-Lord.pdf>

Before the Sun Burned Bright

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOLYDQCrcWg>

Go Make a Difference (a song I didn’t use but really enjoyed)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDjQEoItGzQ> (jazzy)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQJ4TLRy1KI> (guitar only)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBAmAwuzzkE> (choir)

God Has Chosen Me by Bernadette Farrell (so many great renditions!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgNMK2fPDmg> (choir and drums)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIOCUAJxMOc> (Chris Brunelle on guitar and singing)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VWIpHq1Ctc> (SATB and lyrics)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIPeG_pXc3I> (lyrics and images)

Gospel (without edits)

[**Lk 4:21-30**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/luke/4?21)

Jesus began speaking in the synagogue, saying:
“Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”
And all spoke highly of him
and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.
They also asked, “Isn’t this the son of Joseph?”

He said to them, “Surely you will quote me this proverb,
‘Physician, cure yourself,’ and say,
‘Do here in your native place
the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.’”
And he said, “Amen, I say to you,
no prophet is accepted in his own native place.
Indeed, I tell you,
there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah
when the sky was closed for three and a half years
and a severe famine spread over the entire land.
It was to none of these that Elijah was sent,
but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon.
Again, there were many lepers in Israel
during the time of Elisha the prophet;
yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

When the people in the synagogue heard this,
they were all filled with fury.
They rose up, drove him out of the town,
and led him to the brow of the hill
on which their town had been built,
to hurl him down headlong.

But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went away.

Reading 3 image – many more on this site: <https://www.freedomandcaptivity.org/a-good-death/#images-1>