**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer**

 **February 27, 2022 - 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

“A new way of seeing and a new way of hearing…”

**HELLOs (Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME:  (Suzie DeQuattro)**

* Introductions
* Thanks to Deb Ballard, Norb Bufka, Kathy & Lin Linabery for preparing this communal time.
* Thanks to those who will read and lead us in prayer and music: Kathy Cavanaugh, Bill Cavanaugh, Norb Bufka, Lynn Bufka, Deb Ballard, Kathy Linabery, Richard McGinnis, Peggy Thompson, Maryann Dolan, Terri Butel, Debra Street, and Keith Miller

**SETTLING IN (Betty Thompson)**

Let our breath bring us into quiet so we 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. Breathe in, and out. **Pause**

Now LOOK at the community gathered together to make space for our

 loving God who wants to share life with us. **Pause**

Take a second breath as we come together. Breathe in, and out. **Pause**

Let’s take another breath to open ourselves to the movement of the

 Spirit among us.

**GREETING  (Suzie DeQuattro)**

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

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

**OPENING SONG: “Your Mercy Like Rain” by Rory Cooney**

**(Betty – show slide 1 with** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Etu_bouh4Ec> )

 Let me taste your mercy like rain on my face

 Here, in my life, show me your peace.

 Let us see with our own eyes

 Your day breaking bright.

 Come, O Morning, come O Light!

 What God has spoken I will declare:

 Peace to the people of God everywhere.

 God’s saving presence is close at hand:

 Glory as near as our land! Refrain

 Here faithful love and truth will embrace.

 Here peace and justice will come face to face.

 God’s truth shall water the earth like a spring,

 While justice will bend down and sing. Refrain

 God will keep the promise indeed;

 Our land will yield the food that we need.

 Justice shall walk before you that day,

 Clearing a path, preparing your way. Refrain

**CALL TO WORSHIP  (Deb Ballard)**

Beloved Community, we come to this table of plenty as the people of God and the body of Christ. We are invited to this feast of community to celebrate the great fact that God is in love with us. Let us, once again, in our listening and our sharing, awaken to what God is doing in us, and what God is seeking to become in us.

**GATHERING PRAYER  (Deb Ballard)**

Gracious and loving God:

We are reminded today to renew our commitment to you.

We know you are present in our daily lives but sometimes we forget that. Guide us in the renewal of our reception of your loving care.

Awaken in us a renewed hope of true conversion of heart so that we may more fully follow you, especially in our local communities where we are in contact with your people every day.

Help us recognize their needs and reach out in service and loving hospitality. We ask this prayer in Jesus’ name. Blessed be.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME  (Kathy Linabery)**

The gospel for this last Sunday of Ordinary time leads us right into Lent, a season of conversion and renewal.

As Luke begins to wind down the Sermon on the Plain, he quotes a number of wisdom sayings that Jesus probably repeated time and again. Sayings we hear today, make clear Jesus’ command in Luke 6:36: **“Be merciful, just as your God is merciful.”**

Let us allow divine mercy to be the interpretive lens through which we understand today’s passages and questions.

The refrain of our opening song has invited us to ‘feel’ God’s mercy like a gentle rain on our faces….we will see that image throughout our service.

Divine mercy leads us to ask what blindness Jesus is talking about. That blindness comes from the clear message that before admonishing someone else, examine yourself: What is in your heart? All of Jesus’ one-liners suggest a need for changing our hearts. It is the perfect message for this Sunday before Lent begins.

*(Slight pause)*

Now Lynn Bufka will read from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 6, Verses 39-45

followed by questions and silence for reflection. Feel free to stay with whatever

question calls you.

**READING 1** **Luke 6:39-45 (Lynn Bufka)**

Jesus told his disciples a parable,

“Can one blind person guide another?

Surely both will fall into a pit?

A disciple is not superior to the teacher;

but a fully trained disciple

will be like the teacher.

Why do you observe the splinter in another’s eye,

and never notice the log in your own?

How can you say to your brother or sister,

‘Let me take out that splinter in your eye,’

when you cannot see the great log in

your own eye?

Hypocrite!

Take the log out of your own eye first;

and then you will see clearly enough

to take out the splinter in another’s eye.

There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit,

nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit.

Every tree can be told by its own fruit:

People do not pick figs from thorns,

nor gather grapes from brambles.

Good people draw what is good from the store of goodness

in their hearts;

bad people draw what is bad from the store of badness.

For the words of the mouth flow out of what fills the heart.”

*Slight Pause*

**QUESTIONS 1 (Peggy Thompson)**

How do these words of Jesus make you squirm?

What obstacle is blocking your vision?

To what new possibilities might Jesus be calling you?

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

**Betty:**  Now Richard McGinnis will read excerpts from a homily by Fr. Sahaya, G. Selvam, a Salesian of Don Bosco, and from a reflection by Sr. Mary McGlone, a Sister of St. Joseph.

**READING 2 (Richard McGinnis)**

Jesus’ words, written in contemporary language, might read ’How can you get the sawdust out of another’s eye if you have an electric pole in yours?’ They point to a simple truth: perhaps I can spot certain things in another person’s life precisely because I am guilty of the same sin - in probably a greater capacity. Therefore, before I take on the duty to “admonish sinners” - I need to deal with my own sinfulness!

Here is a story rather well-known in India attributed to Mahatma Gandhi:

A woman walked with her son many miles to come to Gandhi. She was very worried about her son’s health because he was eating too much sugar. She came to Gandhi and said, “Please, sir, can you tell my son to stop eating sugar.”

Gandhi looked at her and thought for a while and finally said, “Ok, but not today. Bring him back in two weeks’ time.”

She was disappointed and took her son home. Two weeks later she made that long journey again and went to Gandhi with her son.

Gandhi simply said to the boy, “You must stop eating sugar. It’s not good for your health, my boy.”

The woman was confused and asked him, “Gandhi, please tell me why did you want me to wait two weeks to bring back my son, just to say this one sentence?”

Gandhi said, “Because before I could tell your son to stop eating sugar, I had to stop eating sugar first.”

It is said, the boy had such respect for Gandhi that he stopped eating sugar and lived a healthy life.

Jesus is suggesting that in deeper matters concerning our spiritual lives, in matters that are more than just eating sugar, it might not be so easy just to correct our behavior. The truth is all of us have our logs in our eyes and do not see clearly; only a person who looks on another with the clarity of compassion has what is necessary to help the other grow. Before we can do that, we need work at a deeper level, at our heart… we need to deal with the inner conflict within us.

People who have admitted their own sinfulness and have grasped the saving hand that helped them move forward are the ones who can help another - they know what it feels like to have a blinding log removed from their eye.

Let me work on my heart!

*Slight pause*

**QUESTIONS 2 (Peggy Thompson)**

It is too easy to think of others when listening to this gospel.

As you bask in the unconditional love of Jesus, how are your judgmental thoughts unmasked? What do they reveal?

What is the sugar in your life? How can you find and remove what makes you “blind” or allows you to see others’ faults and not your own?

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

**Betty:**  Now Kathy Cavanaugh will read excerpts from a homily by Augustinian Fr. David A. Cregan and from a reflection by Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr.

**READING 3 (Kathy Cavanaugh)**

The spiritual imperative of self knowledge is a helpful, challenging tool guiding us towards an honest and humble acceptance of ourselves, warts and all! To admit what is wrong is to lean deeply into God’s love and mercy. Frankly, this means being courageously honest about the shadowy parts of our stubbornness, prejudice, anger, and resentment. These inner attitudes are poisonous and infect our interior lives, creating rigidity and free-flowing judgmentalism.

We know we are off track when our emphasis is disproportionately on sin and judgment rather than freedom and grace. It has been said that, for some of us, our preoccupation with sin and judgment is a stronger conviction than our faith in the grace and the wideness of God’s mercy. We need to pay attention to this unhealthy imbalance if we are to call ourselves Christian.

I often reflect personally on how my greatest obstacle to seeing God in all things or from fully surrendering to God’s will is my stubborn self. We like to feel like we are in control.

Admitting we are wrong is not a value in our culture. It’s humiliating, right?

The only people who grow in truth are those who are humble and honest. This is traditional Christian doctrine…. Without those two qualities—humility and honesty—we just don’t grow. Humility and honesty are really the same thing.

Honest humility, which is needed for this difficult interior work, is a profound grace from God. A humble person is simply someone who is naturally honest about their own truth.

The grace to help others, by facing ourselves, enables us to imitate Jesus whose mercy and capacity for boundless healing becomes the source of our capacity for the same.

This is the very vocation that we are invited to participate in through our baptism. God’s work in healing us allows us to do the work of healing others through patience, respect, and compassion.

**QUESTIONS 3 (Peggy Thompson)**

When has someone’s honest humility awakened your honest humility?

In what ways do you participate with God’s work in your healing?

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

Betty :  Peggy Thompson will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING  (Peggy Thompson)**

We invite you to share briefly 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 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 Maryann Dolan will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Maryann Dolan)**

On this Sunday before Lent, we are challenged to be mindful of our thoughts, words, and deeds. May God shake us from our sins of apathy and judgment, so as to provide a path to enter more deeply into the Lenten journey before us. As we bring what is in our hearts to God: Our response will be: **Merciful God, hear our prayer.**

For those who suffer the judgment of others and who make convenient scapegoats for the problems plaguing church and society. We pray, **Merciful God, hear our prayer.**

For all the people impacted by the invasion of Ukraine:  the people living in and defending Ukraine, all leaders making decisions regarding Ukraine, the Russian military and their families, and all peoples of the world watching the escalation in Ukraine. We pray, **Merciful God, hear our prayer.**

For the wisdom to listen compassionately, to judge gently, and to endure tribulations faithfully**.** We pray, **Merciful God, hear our prayer.**

For those marginalized due to race, gender, ethnicity, social status, religious beliefs, political affiliations, and all other forms of prejudice; for the grace to see how we marginalize others. We pray, **Merciful God, hear our prayer.**

For comfort to those who suffer from chronic disease; for those who cannot afford or do not have access to life-saving medical treatment; for all medical professionals who work tirelessly to heal. We pray, **Merciful God, hear our prayer.**

For the Leadership Conference of Women Religious so their voice and actions continue to reflect the mercy of God and to the change of heart we are all called. We pray, **Merciful 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 remember to unmute and mute yourself.

(People speak.)  **Merciful God, hear our prayer.**

Thank you.

God of Endless Mercy:

Hear these prayers and guide us to an ever-deepening awareness of your will. Help us remove the beams in our own eyes so we may better serve others. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Blessed be.

**OFFERTORY (Bill Cavanaugh)**

In these weeks and months of ordinary time, we have celebrated the amazing fact that the Holy One is with us and lives in us now and at every moment. And so we offer ourselves to God in gratitude for having been chosen, just as we are, to be God’s living signing our world. Is there an old or new call that I will live out during the coming week as Lent begins?

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. Blessed be.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION  (Terri Butel)**

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 cup,

gifts of 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.

Blessed be.

Norb Bufka will now lead us in the Our Father, Our Mother.

**OUR FATHER, OUR MOTHER                                  (Norb Bufka)**

Now let us join our hearts in solidarity with all people who seek mercy and transformation as we pray:

***All (muted):*** Our Father, our Mother, who are 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 (Kathy Linabery)**

As we journey through Lent, may we open ourselves to God’s faithful presence and unconditional love so we can be transformed and refashioned into women and men who value each other and our relationships in self sacrificing love.

Let us lift our hands in blessing in the name of our Loving God, of Jesus our Savior, and the Spirit who brings us to wholeness.

**CLOSING SONG: “Change Our Hearts” by Rory Cooney (Debra Street &**

**Keith Miller)**

Refrain: Change our hearts this time, Your word says it can be.

 Change our minds, this time, Your life could make us free.

 We are the people Your call set apart,

 Lord, this time change our hearts.

Brought by your hand to the edge of our dreams.

One foot in paradise, one in the waste.

Drawn by your promises, still we are lured

by the shadows & the chains we leave behind But Refrain

Now as we watch you stretch out your hands,

Offering abundances, fullness of joy.

Your milk & honey seem distance, unreal

when we have bread & water in our hands. But Refrain

Show us the way that leads to your side,

over the mountains & sands of the soul.

Be for us manna, water from stone,

light which says we never walk alone. And Refrain

**RESOURCES:**

2019 the Gift of Blind Guides

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/scripture-life/eighth-sunday-ordinary-time-0>

2022

<https://www.ncronline.org/sunday-resource/feb-27-2022-eighth-sunday-ordinary-time>

Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time

<https://www.augustinian.org/homilies/>

Center for Action and Contemplation

Richard Rohr

<https://cac.org/humility-and-honesty-2016-09-08/>

David A Cregan, O.S.A.

Augustinian Novitiate Community Racine, Wisconsin

<https://www.augustinian.org/homilies/twenty-eighth-sunday-in-ordinary-time-b-wsnpk>