**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**March 6, 2022, the First Sunday of Lent**

*“Now is the acceptable time. Now is the day of salvation! Become an ambassador for Christ.”*

*(2 Corinthians 6:2, 5:20)*

**HELLOs,** then Betty mutes everyone. **(Suzie De Quattro & Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Suzie De Quattro)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Kathy and Bill Cavanaugh, who prepared our prayer for today.
* Thanks to Linda Donaldson for leading our music.
* Betty Thompson and I put together the Opening Ritual, drawing on ideas that came from many in Solidarity with Sisters last year.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today:

 Anne Regan, Kathy Linabery, Terri Butel, Mia Brown, Tim Brown,

 Kathleen Heller, Cecilia Estrada, Linda Donaldson, Maryann Dolan,

 Norb Bufka, and Lynn Bufka.

* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please put a note in Chat or email later.

**SETTLING IN (Betty Thompson)**

We invite you to settle into a comfortable position. Let our collective 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…

one to be together…

and one to make space for the Spirit.

Now **Bill Cavanaugh and Linda Donaldson** will lead us into our prayer together.

**OPENING RITUAL** **(Bill Cavanaugh and Linda Donaldson)**

Leader: Beloved Community, Lent calls us to become Ambassadors of God.

All: O God, we hear you calling.

Leader: Beloved Community, we begin just where we are.

All: O God, we hear you calling.

Leader: Holy One, you appeal to us for justice, peace, and communion for your Body!

All: O God, we hear you calling.

Leader: “Lent is a call to weep for what we could have been and are not. Lent is the grace to grieve for what we should have done and did not. Lent is the opportunity to change what we ought to change but have not…. Lent is about becoming, doing and changing whatever it is that is blocking the fullness of life in us right now.”

How we remove these blockages can change both us and the world. Let the words of Paul echo in us!:

We implore you in Christ’s name: know that you are a friend of God!. . . This is the acceptable time! This is the day of salvation! We beg you not to receive this grace of God in vain.

Let us pause and reflect on what is hindering us making **this** the acceptable time, and **this** the day of salvation. [*Pause about 2 slow, deep breaths.]*

Leader: Let us pray together:

All (muted):

I ask you, my sisters and brothers, to pray for me to our God.

Holy One, accept my deep sorrow for ways in which I participate in the brokenness of your world -- in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and what I have failed to do.

Thank you for your endless love for me, and for your forgiveness that comes even before I ask.

Strengthen me to take an active part in bringing your grace to the world, in the company of all your children, all the saints, and all the Earth. Amen.

( **LINDA** ) (and all, muted): Let’s state this intention in song together.

Sent by our God am I.

My hands are ready now

to make the earth a place

in which your Kin-dom comes. (repeat)

The angels cannot change

A world of hurt and pain

Into a world of love,

Of justice and of peace.

The task is mine to do,

To set it really free,

So help me to obey,

Help me to do your will!

(  **Bill )** : Anne Reganwill now introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME**  **( Anne Regan )**

**“Entering the struggle. Trust. Trouble. Temptation.”**

**( by Mary M McGlone)**

The Israelites remembered and trusted in God’s constant guiding Presence. The psalmist trusted God would be present in times of trouble. Jesus survived temptation in the desert, only by trusting in God’s Love and faithfulness. We too are invited to trust the Spirit is with us as we discern and make choices throughout our Lenten pilgrimage.

*(Slight pause)*

NowKathy Cavanaughwill read a poem by Jan Richardson .

Then Kathy Linabery will offer questions for your reflection, followed by silence. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1**  **(Kathy Cavanaugh)**

We are beginning our Lenten Sundays together. Let us come alive and put ourselves into this wilderness story. We are invited to imagine what it would be like to walk together into the desert with Jesus!

Jan Richardson sets the tone for this movement with her painting, titled “Desert of the Beloved”. She asks “How else to enter the forty-day place that lay ahead of Jesus? How else to cross into the wilderness where Jesus would have no food, no community, nothing familiar—and to top it off, would have to wrestle with the devil? How else, but to go into that landscape with the knowledge of Jesus own name**, BELOVED !”**

Beloved Is Where We Begin

If you would enter

into the wilderness

do not begin

without a blessing

Do not leave

without hearing

who you are:

Beloved.

Named by the One

who has traveled this path

before you.

Do not go

without letting it echo

in your ears

and if you find

it is hard

do not despair:

That is what this journey is for.

I cannot promise

this blessing will free you

from danger, from fear, from hunger, or thirst.

from the scorching of the sun

or the fall of the night

But I can tell you

that you will know

the strange graces

that come to our aid

only on a road such as this,

bearing comfort and strength,

that come along side us

for no other cause

than to lean themselves

toward our ear

and with their curious insistence whisper our name:

Beloved.

Beloved.

Beloved.

*[Slight pause ]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **(Kathy Linabery)**

Can you recall a relationship in your life when you felt Beloved?

How do you choose to see others, including those you strongly disagree with, as God’s Own Beloved?

**COMMUNAL REFLECTION** (**Betty:** Slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

 **(Kathy Linabery ):** Now Terri Butel will read to us from the Gospel of Luke 4:1-13. This gospel is read every first Sunday in Lent. It sets the scene for how much God’s loving grace and word can strengthen us during times of trouble and temptation. Jesus, hungry and tired, drew strength and clarity from the word of God to resist each temptation to turn from God’s plan.

**READING 2 Luke 4:1-13 ( Terri Butel )**

Jesus returned from the Jordan filled with the Holy Spirit, and she led him into the desert for forty days, where he was tempted by the devil. Jesus ate nothing during that time, at the end of which he was famished.

The devil said to Jesus, “If you are God’s Own, command this stone to turn into bread.”

Jesus answered, “Scripture has it, *“We don’t live on bread alone.’ ”*

Then the devil took Jesus up higher and showed him all the nations of the world in a single instant. The Devil said, “ I will give you all the power and the glory of these nations; the power has been given to me and I can give it to whomever I wish. Prostrate yourself in homage before me, and it will be yours.”

Jesus answered, “Scripture has it: *‘You will worship the Most High God; and God alone will you adore.’ “*

Then the devil led Jesus to Jerusalem, set him up on the parapet of the temple and said, “If you are God’s Own, throw yourself down from here, for scripture has it,

“‘God will command his angels to take care of you;

 with their hands they will support you,

 that you may never stumble on a stone.’”

Jesus answered, “*It also says: ‘Do not put God to the test.’”*

When the devil had finished all this tempting, Jesus was left alone. The devil awaited another opportune time.

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **(Kathy Linabery)**

What familiar word(s) of Scripture inspire you when you are troubled or tempted?

Which ‘answer’ of Jesus touches your heart today?

**COMMUNAL REFLECTION** (**Betty:** Slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

 (**Kathy Linabery) :** Now Mia and Tim Brownwill read excerpts from Sister Mary M. McGlone’s reflection on “The First Sunday in Lent.”

**READING 3 ( Mia Brown , Tim Brown)**

**( MIA ) :** Sr Mary McGlone offers several insights about Luke’s Gospel today:

For example**: “…** the devil introduces the first and third temptations with the challenge, ‘If you are God’s Own.’ That implies that Jesus’ desert sojourn began immediately after his baptism where he heard God proclaim, ‘You are my Own Beloved, with you I am well pleased.’ Luke presents the temptations as Jesus’ struggle to live as a faithful child of God. We believe Jesus of Nazareth was a human being in every sense of the word.” He lives out his mission which will lead him into his passion, agony in the garden, crucifixion and resurrection. “Anyone who lives in passion, anyone who becomes deeply committed to the cause of Jesus’ mission. will be tempted in the same way Jesus was.”

**( TIM ) :**  Next, some thoughts about how subtle temptation can be: “The trickiest thing about temptations is that they can arrive in the camouflage of good ideas, even as ways to advance the reign of God. The devil is an expert at disguise: slicker than fake news and much more subtle than our ads that claim absurdities like the idea that love is confined in a particular make of car. “

**( MIA ) :**  The last insight that Sr Mary McGlone tells us is about how temptation is not a one-and-done thing: Scripture says: “the devil departed from Jesus awaiting another opportune time.” We can be grateful to Luke for telling us that temptation was not a one-time event for Jesus any more than it is for us.

**( TIM ) :** With these three insights in mind, …”today’s Gospel invites us into the 40 days of Lent as a time to contemplate and learn from Jesus about how to be faithful children of God. Jesus did it to show us how to do the same.”

 Henry Nouwen also tells us about Jesus’ desert encounter: “In the hardship of the desert, dwelling in the presence of God, Jesus peacefully listens to the devil speak and then answers peacefully with truth.”

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[ pause after each question ]* **( Kathy Linabery )**

How have you found prayer and contemplation deepen your friendship with God so you can respond to temptations peacefully and with truth?

When are you more likely to feel the temptation that keeps returning and surprising you? (For example: when you are tired, discouraged, on social media, worried, criticized, stuck in traffic, watching the news, etc… )

**COMMUNAL REFLECTION** (**Betty:** Slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

**SHARING ( Kathy Heller )**

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. *[Long-ish pause]*

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

[Sharing]

[If there is extended silence:] Take whatever quiet you need before you speak.

[If there is extended silence late in the sharing:] Is there anyone else who would like to share?  *[Pause for a slow, deep breath.]*

*[Stop by about 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 )**

Let’s pause in silence to notice what prayer rises in us now. *[Pause….]*

Our response today: **Loving God, in whom we trust, hear our prayer.** (Psalm 91)

For all the people impacted by the invasion of Ukraine: the people living in and defending and fleeing Ukraine, all the leaders making decisions regarding Ukraine, the Russian military and their families, and all peoples of the world watching in solidarity with Ukraine: **We pray: Loving God, in whom we trust, hear our prayer.**

For increased awareness of our internal motivations that hurt our relationships with others and creation; for reconciliation of all broken relationships; and for a greater awareness of Jesus’ presence in our lives, **We pray: Loving God, in whom we trust, hear our prayer.**

For a spirit of cooperation among nations; safety for those fleeing oppression and danger; and for policies and borders that welcome the stranger, **We pray: Loving God, in whom we trust, hear our prayer.**

For your blessing upon all the members of Leadership Conference of Woman Religious who act to seek racial justice for minorities and immigrants, to stop human trafficking, to bring relief to those who are hungry, sick, abused and oppressed; and who act to encourage reverence for All God’s creation. **We pray: Loving God, in whom we trust, hear our prayer.**

For your guidance and wisdom, as we walk together with Pope Francis answering the Synodal call to be repairers of the breach of inclusion, and to listen with a synodal heart to the responses of all voices. **We pray, Loving God, in whom we trust, hear our prayer.**

For what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute yourself afterwards.

(Shared prayers) **Loving God, in whom we trust, hear our prayer.**

Thank you!

O You who love us more than we can imagine, we are grateful for this chance to give you our prayers, spoken and unspoken. We entrust the outcome to you. Amen.

**OFFERTORY ( Linda Donaldson )**

Holy One, in this season of Lent, we offer ourselves to you, knowing that you accept us just as we are.

Linda and All (sung:) Take, oh take me as I am. (twice)

Reflect on your Lenten intention. (Long pause)

Generous God, Creative Spirit, we rely on your grace to strengthen us with your compassion. We will use our time, our talents, and our treasure so that we may be a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION ( Maryann Dolan )**

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.]*

Let us know God within 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, OUR MOTHER ( Norb Bufka )**

**All (muted):**

Now let us join our hearts with to pray with all our family throughout the world:

Our Father, Our Mother, who art in heaven,

hallowed be your name.

Your kin-dom 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 kin-dom, the power, and the glory are yours,

now and forever. Amen!

**FINAL BLESSING ( Lynn Bufka )**

**A Saginaw Diocese blessing** :

May the Lord bless and keep you!
May he make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.
And give you his peace.

May our God bless and keep you!
May she make her face shine upon you and be gracious to you.
And give you her peace. Amen.

**CLOSING SONG ( Kathy Cavanaugh )**

Now, as we continue to walk our journey of faith together let us listen to this African American Spiritual journey song: “ I Want Jesus To Walk With Me” (sung by Eric Bibb).

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

**RESOURCES:**

* Jan Richardson, from “Lent 1: beloved Is Where We Begin”; The Painted Prayerbook, February 2016:http;//[paintedprayerbook.com/…/lent-1-beloved](http://paintedprayerbook.com/%25E2%2580%25A6/lent-1-beloved)-is-where.../. Used with permission.
* Image for first communal silence: “Desert of the Beloved” © Jan Richardson. Used with permission.
* Mary M. McGlone: Cycle C Sunday Resources, “Entering the Struggle” quoted March 10, 2019; February 3rd, 2022; Published by National Catholic Reporter and March 6, 2022: https://[www.ncronline.org](http://www.ncronline.org)/print/sunday-resource/march-6-first-sunday-lent
* Gospel of Luke 4:1-16, *The Inclusive Bible; The First Egalitarian Translation*, A Sheed and Ward Book; ROWMAN and LITTLEFIELD Publishers, INC, 2007.
* “I Want Jesus To Walk With Me” listed as being from the African American Tradition . Calvin Earl, who successfully lobbied before Congress in 2007 to recognize African American Spiritual Songs as national treasures, relays the story of an early tour of the Fisk Jubilee singers where the singing of “I want Jesus To Walk With Me” saved them from a mob. It is not unusual for a spiritual to have an unknown source. These songs are the spontaneous utterances of those who originally sang them. They are the fruit of the creative spirit of an entire people rather than individuals. These historical songs tell us about the people in a land of bondage struggling to be free, their source of strength in time of trouble. These songs are known as ‘Journey Songs”..a companion spiritual.(Victoria Schwarz and Rev. Wilson Pruitt, 4, 08, 2019 from Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church) <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-i-want-jesus-to-walk-with-me>
* Henry J. M. Nouwen: “Letters to Marc About Jesus: Living a spiritual life in a material world.”; Harper, SanFrancisco Publisher, 1998
* Opening Ritual – “Lent is a call…” quote from Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister: <http://rosemarieberger.com/2011/03/15/joan-chittister-lent-is-a-chance-to-grieve/>
* Third “Our Father, Our Mother” option - The universal prayer of Jesus from Parker J. Palmer <https://www.elkgroveumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Alternative-versions-of-the-Lord.pdf>