**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**MARCH 20, 2022 the Third 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 Suzie De Quattro & Betty Thompson**

* After Betty mutes everyone: introduce Terri and David, with thanks for preparing today’s prayer.

**WELCOME Terri & David Butel**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Karen & Dan McCarthy, Ann Masters, Betty Thompson, Suzie De Quattro, and first- time attendees from the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth - Sr. Phyllis Stowell, and Associates Donna Mae Donahue and Katie Kilbourne.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please put a note in Chat or email later.

**SETTLING IN Betty Thompson**

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 **Karen and Dan McCarthy** will lead us into our prayer together.

**OPENING RITUAL** **Karen & Dan McCarthy/Terri & David Butel**

Karen or Dan: God of our fruitfulness, we are here to listen to you.

Dan or Karen: Beloved Community, Lent calls us to become Ambassadors of God.

Karen or Dan, and Everyone (muted): O God, we hear you calling.

Dan or Karen: Beloved Community, we begin just where we are.

Karen or Dan, and Everyone (muted): O God, we hear you calling.

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

Karen or Dan, and Everyone (muted): O God, we hear you calling.

Dan/Karen: “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 15 seconds – about 2 slow deep breaths.]*

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.

**Terri & David** (**and all, muted**): Let’s state this intention in song.

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!

Karen or Dan: **Suzie De Quattro** will introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME**  **Suzie De Quattro**

Today’s readings are about God’s nearness and concern and our grateful response.

First, our “present tense” God, the one “**who is”**, ***sees*** our struggles, ***hears*** our cries, and is stirred to intervene with a plan for relief and***much***more – abundance and comfort. Only one catch: the full rescue relies upon one such as us. In the parable of the unproductive fig tree, we are reminded that fruitfulness is no accident. The poem that follows flips the fig leaf of the oft-held notion that value is measured primarily by effort and achievement.

*(Slight pause)*

**Katie Kilbourne** will read from the 3rd chapter of Genesis. **Ann Masters** will offer questions to take us into silence.

**READING 1 0 Exodus 3:1-10, 13-15 Katie Kilbourne/Terri & David**

Moses led the flock across the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There an angel appeared to Moses in fire flaming out of a bush. Moses was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed, and thought, “I must go over to look at this remarkable sight, and see why the bush is not burned.”

When God saw Moses coming, God called out from the bush, "Moses! Moses!” Moses answered, “Here I am.” God said, “Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.

**Terri & David Butel SING**: **(and all, muted**): Holy ground, We're standing on holy ground, For our God is present, And where God is is holy.

Then God said, “I have witnessed the affliction of my people and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Now, go! I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” Moses said to God, “But when I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ if they ask me, ‘What is this god’s name?’ what am I to tell them?” God replied, “This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me.”

**Terri & David Butel SING**: **(and All, muted**) Holy lips, God's given us holy lips, God speaks through these lips, And so these lips are holy.

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **Ann Masters**

How do I sustain faith in a God who sees, hears and has concern for people’s suffering but does not appear to rescue them?

How have I stalled for time recently to avoid confronting an oppressor?

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

**Betty:** Next, **Donna Mae Donahue** will read to us from the Gospel of Luke.

**READING 2 – Luke 13:6-9 Donna Mae Donahue**

Jesus told them this parable:

“There once a fig tree planted in an orchard.

The owner came in search of fruit on it but found none.

The owner said to the gardener,

‘For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree

but have found none.

So cut it down.

Why should it exhaust the soil?’

The gardener replied,

‘Please leave it for this year also,

and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it;

it may bear fruit in the future.

If not, you can cut it down.’”

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **Ann Masters**

How do I fertilize my spirit - Scripture? Silence? Time in nature? Other? How does this rank among my daily or weekly priorities?

What is it like for me to notice a part of myself that has not grown in the last few years?

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

**Betty:** Now **Sr. Phyllis Stowell** will share a reflective poem.

**READING 3 Sr. Phyllis Stowell**

**What I Forgot**

Sometimes I wish I was the fig tree.

No fruit here, just soaking up the sun,

growing roots, turning green,

stretching out my branches until

I can hug the horizon.

Sometimes I wish I was the fig tree,

because she doesn’t produce,

and she’s not exhausted,

and she probably gets eight hours

of sleep at night.

And her branches,

unlike my shoulders,

are not heavy with work—

pulled toward the ground,

threatening to break.

And her trunk,

unlike my spine,

is not fighting to stand tall

while holding it all together.

Sometimes I wish I was the fig tree

because she knows

what I forgot

many years ago.

You are still worthy

even if

you don’t produce.

By Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

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*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **Ann Masters**

What word or phrase spoke to me and what meaning does it have for me at this time in my life?

Who do I know who might personally relate to this poem? What is one thing I can offer this week to relieve “shoulders heavy with work” or the struggle of “holding it all together”?

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

**Betty: Ann Masters** will lead our sharing.

**SHARING Ann Masters**

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 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 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 **Karen & Dan McCarthy** will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY Karen & Dan McCarthy**

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

Our response today will be: **Compassionate God, hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God, you sent Moses to liberate the oppressed. Help us to recognize your **call** and to liberate our neighbors who suffer, we pray ... **Compassionate God, hear our prayer.**

Bless and protect the victims of violence, war and abuse, especially our sisters and brothers in Ukraine, we pray ... **Compassionate God, hear our prayer.**

Bless the courageous members of the Leadership Conference of Woman Religious who bring relief to the oppressed, we pray: **Compassionate God, hear our prayer.**

Enkindle wonder in your people and help us to celebrate the newness of life with the coming of spring, we pray ... **Compassionate God, hear our prayer.**

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

(Shared prayers) **Compassionate God, hear our prayer.**

Leader: O You who see us, hear us, and love us more than we can imagine, thank you for receiving our intentions, spoken and unspoken. We entrust all to you. Amen.

**OFFERTORY Katie Kilbourne/Terri & David Butel**

Katie: Holy One, we bring you ourselves knowing you accept us just as we are.

**Music: Terri & David Butel lead: (Sing it twice)**

Take, O take me as I am.

Summon out what I shall be.

Set your seal upon my heart

And live in me.

Katie: In what specific way have **I heard** your call to me this week? *(Long pause)*

Holy One, we rely on your grace, which we do not take in vain. We will use our time, our talents, and our treasure to work towards being your ambassadors in the world. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION Sr. Phyllis Stowell**

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 Donna Mae Donahue**

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 David Butel**

**Prayer for Peace in Ukraine**

Loving God, your Son Jesus Christ, wept over Jerusalem.  
Today, we weep over Ukraine.  
We weep for those uprooted from their homes and lives.  
We weep for those cowering in basements.  
We weep for those who have witnessed death and destruction on their streets.  
We weep for those separated from parents, from children, from spouses and siblings.  
We are amazed at the resilience of people seeking to comfort those in need and so we pray for Governments opening up borders so that Ukrainians can have safe passage.  
We pray for churches and individuals providing food, clothing and shelter.  
We pray for medical workers ensuring that shattered bodies are put back together again.  
We pray for ordinary Russians demonstrating and voicing their disapproval of the military actions in Ukraine.  
May the Holy Spirit give us the willpower to turn our tears into action also.  
May we, through our words, prayers and example pursue the things that make for a just peace in the world today and especially in Ukraine.  
  
In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen

**CLOSING SONG – Let There Be Peace On Earth (Terri & David Butel)**

Let there be peace on earth  
And let it begin with me.  
Let there be peace on Earth  
The peace that was meant to be.

In God our Creator  
We are family.  
Let us walk with each other  
In perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me  
Let this be the moment now.

With ev'ry step I take  
Let this be my solemn vow:  
To take each moment and live  
Each moment in peace eternally.  
Let there be peace on earth  
And let it begin with me.

**RESOURCES**

* 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/>
* Sent By The Lord Am I , Matt Beckingham - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uN-oeDI7Ag>
* What I Forgot, poem by Reverend Sarah (Are) Speed, © 2021 , from Full to the Brim Lenten prayer devotional| A Sanctified Art LLC | Used with permission. <https://sanctifiedart.org/>
* Our Father, Our Mother – by Parker J. Palmer
* Take O Take Me As I Am - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJP-2Y7K3M0>
* Final blessing from the United Methodist Church in the United Kingdom