**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**September 4, 2022 – 23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time**

*“Choosing Jesus Above All”*

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

**WELCOME (Mary Dolmage)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Cecilia and I are pleased to have prepared today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in music and prayer today: ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­Cheryl Dowden, Pat Campbell, Peggy Thompson, Sister Jo’Ann De Quattro, Richard McGinnis, Jim De Quattro, Suzie De Quattro, Betty Thompson, Sister Vera Ruotolo, and Linda Donaldson.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Mary Dolmage)**

Settle into in a position where you feel supported and comfortable. Let your breath slow and deepen and find its natural pace… in and out…. *[Pause.]* Become aware of divine peace surrounding you…. *[Pause.]*  Let that peace flow into three collective breaths: one to be here…. one to be together… and one to welcome the Holy Spirit. *[Pause.]*

Let’s join in with each other as we sing “The Summons” to lead us into our prayer today.

**OPENING SONG –** “The Summons” *(Betty: Share video.)*

<https://youtu.be/GiXnbOORTAU>

**CALL TO WORSHIP/ GATHERING PRAYER**  **(Mary Dolmage)**

We gather together to encounter Christ, letting ourselves be caught up in and guided by the love He taught. A love that enlarges our horizons of existence and gives us a firm hope which will not disappoint. We pray for faith that will enhance our lives. A faith that makes us aware of a magnificent calling to a vocation of love and service.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Cecilia Estrada)**

What does it mean to be a Christian and what does it mean to have the resources to be a disciple of Jesus? That is what the readings are addressing this week.

Today’s Gospel focuses on the difficulty and cost of discipleship. Some of the language can be a bit jarring, particularly in Luke’s Gospel. Jesus says we must turn our backs to our mothers and fathers, siblings, spouse, and children.

In a parallel Gospel passage in Matthew, Jesus says, “Whoever loves their mother or father more than me is not worthy of me.” What Jesus is asking us to do is to have faith in Him and prioritize our lives. He is asking us to leave everything behind and answer the call to follow Him in this world and into the eternal reign of God. To be a disciple of Jesus, we must have our eyes wide open about what discipleship demands of us.

*[Slight pause]*

Now ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­Cheryl Dowden will read from the Gospel of Luke.

Peggy Thompson will offer questions that will lead us into silence.

**READING 1** – Luke 14:25-33 **(Cheryl Dowden)**

Large crowds followed Jesus. He turned to them and said, “If any of you come to me without turning your back on your mother and your father, your loved ones, your sisters, and brothers, indeed your very self, you can’t be my follower. Anyone who doesn’t take up the cross and follow me can’t be my disciple.”

“If one of you were going to build a tower, wouldn’t you first sit down and calculate the outlay to see if you have enough money to complete the project?

You’d do that for fear of laying the foundation and then not being able to complete the work—because anyone who saw it would jeer at you and say, ‘You started a building and couldn’t finish it.’ Or if the leaders of one country were going to declare war on another country, wouldn’t they first sit down and consider whether, with an army of ten thousand, they could win against an enemy coming against them with twenty thousand? If they couldn’t, they would send a delegation while the enemy is still at a distance, asking for terms of peace.

“So, count the cost. You can’t be my disciple if you don’t say goodbye to all of your possessions.”

**QUESTIONS 1** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Peggy Thompson)**

How will you wake up each morning and challenge yourself to prioritize God above all else each day?

When you examine your own heart, what do you value the most? What is most important to you in your life? What would it be like to give that up?

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

**Cecilia:** Pat Campbell will read from paraphrased selections of “When Saying No Means Saying Yes”by Steve Thomason, and Catholic Women Preach by Gina Messina for the Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary time.

**READING 2**  **(Pat Campbell)**

Jesus speaks harshly when he tells his followers that they cannot be his disciples unless they turn their backs on their family, take up a cross, and count the cost.

It seems that Jesus tells us to **say no** to our lives in order to follow him. Why? Because it will cost *everything* to be his disciple and live in God’s kingdom.

Jesus is calling us to deeply consider what it means to focus on doing God’s work, being committed to a socially just community – one that cares for every person, offers fairness and equitable conditions. Many of us are in a position in a society where we have some form of privilege - and that is something we have to acknowledge, own, and recognize. Our privilege is a resource. For those of us who are privileged, we have a responsibility to speak up on behalf of the voiceless.

When Jesus says we need to be 'all in,' to be a disciple, what does this mean? First, we need to be honest with ourselves and acknowledge that being 'all in' is rare - it is challenging and a great risk that many of us are not willing to take. That said, what we can do is wake up every morning and acknowledge our position in the world, our abilities to contribute to positive social change, and do our best to make that happen.

A just world is built by disciples who live the four primary principles that Jesus preached: love, inclusion, liberation, and social justice. They know that there is no shortcut if they are serious about building that world.

And we must acknowledge that we are called to **be the change**. We often think that as individuals we don’t have the ability to make an impact. But the truth is, it is the acts of individuals - the smallest acts carried out with the greatest love – that transforms our communities.

This is what Jesus is calling us to do. This is what it means to be a Christian and a disciple. We must return to the roots of God’s primary principles and demand that the life of every living being is valued.

**QUESTIONS 2** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Peggy Thompson)**

What “small acts” do you carry out daily to give value to others?

In a polarized time, how do you hold together the priority of your witness to Christian values and your call to “be communion” in our fractious families and world?

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

**Cecilia:** In the Ignatian tradition there is a prayer to return all we have to God. It was written 600 years ago and reminds us of the timeless urgency of choosing these priorities. We will now take a few minutes to reflect on this as we listen to the song “Take Lord, Receive.”

**REFLECTION 3:** *(Betty: Share video.)*

Take Lord, Receive

<https://youtu.be/pqkDrb76NEo>

**QUESTIONS 3** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Peggy Thompson)**

How do you make God’s love and grace enough for yourself? For those who surround you?

What are you willing to “return to God?”

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

**Cecilia:** Richard McGinnis will lead our sharing of personal reflections.

**SHARING (Richard McGinnis)**

We know the wisdom of our community includes both words shared and silent listening. Now, if you’d like, we invite you to share the essence of what is emerging within you from our readings and silence. Let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. *[Longer pause]*

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

[Sharing]

*[Long silences are common, and they can be fruitful. If there is extended silence after 15 minutes:]* Is there anyone else who would like to share?  *[Long pause]*

*[Stop by about 20 after the hour.]*

Thank you.  We can continue after the final song, as we often do.

Now Jo’Ann De Quattro will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Jo’Ann De Quattro)**

Let’s pause to notice the prayers that arise in us now. *[Pause]* Our response will be:

**Holy One, we are grateful for your love**.

O You Who loves us, we ask through the intercession of St. Theresa of Calcutta, whose Feast Day we celebrate tomorrow, relief for those who are in need: the sick and dying, those who suffer from hunger, poverty, or violence. Bring peace to those who are alienated, afraid and alone.

**For this we pray. Holy One, we are grateful for your love**.

O You Who is with us, we pray for peace in our world. Bless us with an end to tensions, conflicts, and wars, so that nations may use their energies to cure disease and alleviate poverty.

**For this we pray. Holy One, we are grateful for your love**.

O God who knows us, on this Labor Day Weekend, we ask, through the intercession of St. Joseph the Worker, that all who labor will be appreciated, treated fairly, respected, and receive fair compensation for their efforts.

**For this we pray. Holy One, we are grateful for your love**.

O God who guides us, bless the courageous members of the Leadership Conference of Woman Religious and all sisters as they work each day to serve you and those around them.

**For this we pray. Holy One, we are grateful for your love**.

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

*[Shared prayers]*

**For this we pray. Holy One, we are grateful for your love**.

O You who know us, with gratitude, we welcome and return the gifts You have given us. We will do all that we can to put our prayers into action. We entrust all to you. Blessed Be!

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Suzie De Quattro)**

(Take bread and drink in front of you)

As we prepare to share this meal, let us be conscious of the Holy One we call our Creator, Friend, Mother, Father, Sister, Brother, Redeemer, Provider, and Sustainer.

Mindful of those who tilled the soil, those who harvested its bounty, and those who toiled in the heat of sun and kitchen, we ask blessings on all of them; they are here with us in a special way.

We ask you, Holy One, to accept our gifts and transform them into plenty to share with our sisters and brothers in need. Accept our gratitude for your love and grace. Accept our efforts to give thanks for each other.

Bless and inspire us, as we struggle to realize our vision of a better world, a world of peace, a world where generosity and commitment makes the seemingly impossible, possible.

Bless us as we become eucharist for one another.

Give us and our world, we pray, plenty of knowledge and wisdom,

plenty of justice and compassion, plenty of bread and peace.

Blessed Be!

**SHARING BREAD (Jim De Quattro)**

Holding the bread and drink let us pray together, as we extend our hands outward and bless these gifts in thanksgiving for life.

Open our eyes to see the hunger of others. Thank you for promising and giving us food for the journey.

Whoever you are and wherever you are on your journey of faith there is a place for you at Christ’s table. We are one bread. We are one family.

Let us now eat the bread and drink. May we be true examples of God’s love for each other and the world.

*[Long-ish pause]*

Let us all say: **Blessed Be! So be it!**

To extend our communion, Sister Vera Ruotolo will lead us in the prayer of Jesus.

**THE PRAYER OF JESUS (Sister Vera Ruotolo)**

Now let us join our hearts in the words of the Polynesian and Maori people and the New Zealand Anglican community:

Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world;
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trial too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Blessed Be!

**FINAL BLESSING (Betty Thompson)**

Let us extend our hands over each other as we pray:

May we be blessed with the riches of wisdom, goodness, grace,

understanding, and love.

May we be blessed with provisions for our needs, knowing and understanding that all we have is gift.

May we be blessed with an increase of faith that overflows in gratitude to God.

May we be blessed with an increasing abound of love for others, giving and receiving graciously.

May we be blessed with hearts that are holy and true.

In God’s powerful name, we pray.

Blessed Be!

**CLOSING SONG (Linda Donaldson)**

**God Has Chosen Me**

byBernadette Farrell

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:
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.

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:
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.

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:
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.

**Resources**

:

* THE SUMMONS (Will you come and follow Me) based on MARK 1,16-20 Words and music by JOHN L. BELL
* TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

GINA MESSINA - Catholic Women Preach

* When Saying No Means Saying Yes | A Devo on Luke 14:25-35

 by [Steve Thomason](https://www.stevethomason.net/author/stevet2018/)

* “Take Lord, Receive” by John Foley, SJ based on the Suscipe of St. Ignatius of Loyola
* The Living Word Liturgy Training Publications 2022-2023
* “God Has Chosen Me”byBernadette Farrell