**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**Nov. 6, 2022 – 32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time**

**“We are God’s children, children of the resurrection.”**

**HELLOs** and then Betty mutes everyone.

**WELCOME (Suzie De Quattro)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* We had the pleasure of preparing today’s prayer.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in music and prayer today: Peggy Thompson, Donna Ellerman, Dan McCarthy, Kathy Heller, Debbie Ballard, Terri Butel, Jim De Quattro, Karen McCarthy, Sister Melanie DiPietro, Mia Brown, Tim Brown, and Linda Donaldson.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Donna Ellerman)**

Let yourself settle into the quiet center in yourself. Feel the breath moving in you… in and out… loosening you… making space inside you…. In and out…. God’s own breath entering you…. uniting you with all that breathes, all that is… opening you to the Spirit moving in you…. In us…. Here….

Now Peggy Thompson will lead us into our prayer together:

**OPENING SONG: “On Eagles’ Wings” by Michael Joncas (Peggy Thompson)**

You who dwell in the shelter of our God,
Who abide in God’s shadow for life,
Say to the Lord, "My Refuge,
My Rock in Whom I trust."

 And God will raise you up on eagle’s wings,

 Bear you on the breath of dawn,

Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of Her Hand.

The snare of the fowler will never capture you,
And famine will bring you no fear;
Under those wings your refuge,
That faithfulness your shield.

 And God will raise you up on eagle’s wings,

 Bear you on the breath of dawn,

Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of His Hand.

For to God’s angels is given a command,
To guard you in all of your ways,
Upon their hands they will bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.

 And God will raise you up on eagle’s wings,

 Bear you on the breath of dawn,

Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of God’s Hand,

And hold you in the palm of God’s Hand.

**CALL TO WORSHIP/GATHERING PRAYER (Dan McCarthy)**

God pours out unconditional love to us, and to all creation. We believe that God’s love opens new life to us now and forever, even after what we call death. We gather in gratitude. We gather as imperfect people who help each other to bring God’s love to life in the world. And so we pray:

May the witness to Christ be strong among us, and fill us with the gifts of the Spirit as we work for and wait for the fullness of God’s reign. May God keep us steady as we inquire, nudge, and challenge each other. May it be so. *[Pause.]*

**INTRO TO THEME (Suzie De Quattro)**

Our readings today challenge us to think about death – our own, that of those we love. As Jan Richardson wrote soon after the death of her husband:  “Death has a way of tearing our hearts open toward eternity.  We are no longer residents of this world only, we no longer move only in this time.  It is one of the strange and beautiful effects of intense loss.”

We will not hear, but you probably know, the Old Testament story of seven brothers and their mother. The king killed them, one by one, in gruesome ways because they steadfastly chose to obey Yahweh, not the king. As each died, they spoke with confident joy of the life with God to which they were going.

In our Gospel, the Sadducees ask Jesus for a legal interpretation of a fabricated problem. Jesus goes deep, to the real point about our understanding of eternal life. We rely on images to explore these mysteries, and yet the images also limit and constrain us. What would it be like to experience the limitlessness of God?

Now Kathy Heller will read from the Gospel of Luke. Then Debbie Ballard will offer questions to invite you into silent reflection.

**READING 1 – Luke 20:27-38 (Kathy Heller)**

Some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection,
put this question to Jesus:
"Teacher, Moses wrote for us,
*If someone's brother dies leaving a wife but no child,
his brother must take the wife
and raise up descendants for his brother.*
Now there were seven brothers;
the first married a woman but died childless,

and then the same with all the brothers.
Finally the woman also died.
At the resurrection, whose wife will that woman be?
For all seven had been married to her."

Jesus replied, “The people of this age marry and are given in marriage.

But in the age to come, [our lives will be different from what we know here.]

People will neither marry nor be given in marriage,

and they will not die again, for they are like the angels.

They are God’s children, children of the resurrection.

The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob

is not the God of the dead, but of the living, the one for whom all are alive.”

**QUESTIONS 1** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Debbie Ballard)**

How do you imagine your relationships in “the age to come”?

When have you felt death close to you or someone dear to you, and consciously entrusted life, death, and resurrection to God?

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

Betty: Terri Butel will read a reflection from Bishop Ken Untener with an introduction from Sister Mary McGlone.

**READING 2 (Terri Butel)**

The Sadducees believed that a man lived on only through his descendants. They weave for Jesus an outrageous conundrum. Jesus deftly goes to the root of their tricky question. He focuses on the fact that life in the reign of God has nothing to do with children or anything that human beings produce. Jesus says that the meaning of life comes from God, and in relationships of love ‘like the angels.’ (McGlone)

Have you ever wondered what that’s like? What happens to us when we die?

We all think about that now and then. And because we have to use familiar images, we picture the best things in this life, and project them into the next. Maybe a huge reunion party with pickleball, bridge, music, and chocolate….

There's nothing wrong with that, as long as we realize they're only images.

In the letter to the Corinthians, Paul asks our question: “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come back?”

Paul answers: "With wheat, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed.” If we study that seed, we cannot see the shape, color, and fragrance of the wheat. “God gives the seed a body... and to each seed its own body…. We will all be changed and put on immortality.”

We believe in life after death. Further, we believe in human life after death - bodily life. But the age to come is beyond our imaginings - as different as a wheat is from its seed. Risen human life is something eye has never seen, ear has never heard.

So we use images, but we have to remember that they are only images. Life after death is far more than an extension of this life with some improvements. We are transformed.

**QUESTIONS 2** *[Pause after each question.]* **(Debbie Ballard)**

What do you imagine will happen to you when you die? How do feel about not actually knowing?

What images feel true to you when you ponder life after death?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** *[Betty: Share slide with questions, time 2:00, chime.]*

Betty: Jim De Quattro will continue with Bishop Untener’s reflection.

**READING 3** **(Jim De Quattro)**

Closely related to our last reflection is our image of God.

Sometimes we imagine God in limited terms, our own terms. But God is not simply a "super-person." God is not like us but a lot better. No. God is far, far beyond anything you and I can picture or imagine. All we can do is use symbols. God is beyond any category we know.

* God exists, but beyond our category of existence.
* God is "personal," but beyond the category of persons.
* God is living, but beyond the category of life.
* God is loving, and love is wondrous, but beyond even our category of love.
* God is powerful, but beyond any category of power we know.
* God is good, but beyond any category of goodness we know.

This "mystery of faith" is not like a puzzle we haven't figured out yet. A "mystery" is so great, so different, that we can't fit it into our brain. It's beyond us. Glorious. Wonderful.

We have to be careful not to trivialize God, sell God short. We can use images, but we have to know that they are images.

Now... the wonder of it all is that God, who is so far beyond our best categories, connects with us. God, who is totally beyond everything we know, somehow makes us God’s own children. We have God's life in us. This would be like adopting a tree as your daughter... and it's way beyond that. Yet, God is present to us, within us, around us. God relates to us, loves us, cares for us.

**QUESTIONS 3** *(Pause after each question.]* **(Debbie Ballard)**

So let us enjoy the wonder and awe of our God. If you’d like, rinse your mind of thoughts and images, and simply experience God. Be with God, and know it.

If you have a beloved image of God, you might use that as your entry point.

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

Betty: Karen McCarthywill lead us in sharing our personal reflections.

**SHARING (Karen McCarthy)**

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. [Long-ish 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 11:20.]

Thank you.  Let us pause for a minute of silence to hold all that has been said, and to notice what is rising in us in response. [Long pause]

Hold onto what God is saying in you right now. We can continue after the final song, as we often do. For now, let us respond to God in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Sr. Melanie DiPietro)**

Let’s pause to notice the prayers that arise in us now. *(Pause)* Our response will be:  Holy Mystery, bless us.

First I invite you to name aloud your loved ones who have moved into God’s full embrace in the past year or so. [Pause while people do this.] In gratitude for their lives and for their continued life in God, we pray. Holy Mystery, bless us.

In gratitude for those who awaken us to divine presence, we pray. Holy Mystery, bless us. Holy Mystery, bless us.

In gratitude and in hope for how people world-wide are awakening and coming together to act against racism, climate change, polarization, and public lies, we pray. Holy Mystery, bless us.

In solidarity with women religious and all who seek to be God’s presence in the world, we pray. Holy Mystery, bless us.

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

*[Shared prayers]* Holy Mystery, bless us.

Thank you.

O You who know us better than we know ourselves, thank you for walking with us in our vulnerability. We keep our hearts open with confident faith that whatever comes will always hold the gift of your Spirit. With gratitude, we welcome the Spirit you share. We entrust all to you. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Mia Brown)**

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 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, we entrust ourselves to you and to one another.

Make us your bread of abundance.  Make us your wine of joy.

Let even our fragments be plenty to share.

Amen.

To extend our communion, Tim Brown will lead us in the prayer of Jesus.

**THE PRAYER OF JESUS (Tim Brown)**

Now let us join our hearts in harmony with our family throughout the world:

***All (muted):*** Our Father, Our Mother, you are here among us.

blessed be your Creation.

May your reign be a reality here on earth.

May we become more interested in building your kin-dom here and now than in waiting for it to come down from above.

Let us share our bread with those who hunger.

Let us learn to forgive as well as to receive forgiveness.

Help us through the time of temptation, delivering us from all evil.

For ours are the eternal blessings that you pour upon the earth.

Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Betty Thompson)**

Let us call to mind and gather all around us those we love who already abide with God. [Pause to silently name people whom we bring to this blessing.]

Let this blessing
settle into you
with its hope
more ancient
than knowing.

Hear how this blessing
has not come alone—
how it echoes with
the voices of those
who accompany you,
who attend you in every moment,
who continually whisper
this blessing to you.

Hear how they
do not cease
to walk with you,
even when the dark
is deepest.
hear how they
encompass you always—
breathing this blessing to you,
bearing this blessing to you
still.

*[Pause.]*

Feeling that blessing, let’s join in “How Can I Keep from Singing” with Linda Donaldson.

**CLOSING SONG How Can I Keep from Singing (Linda Donaldson)**

My life flows on in endless song
Above earth’s lamentations,
I hear the real, though far-off hymn
That hails a new creation.

No storm can shake my inmost calm,
While to that rock I’m clinging.
Since Love is lord of heaven and earth
How can I keep from singing?

Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear its music ringing,
It sounds an echo in my soul.
How can I keep from singing?

The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,
A fountain ever springing.
All things are mine since I am his;
How can I keep from singing?

**RESOURCES:**

**“On Eagle’s Wings” inclusive language:** Thanks to Peggy Thompson, Karen McCarthy, and Richard and Alice McGinnis

**Bishop Ken Untener homily:** <http://visitationnorth.org/index.php/year-c-luke/174-thirty-second-sunday-in-ordinary-time-year-c>

**Sr. Mary McGlone reflection:** <https://www.ncronline.org/sunday-resource/nov-10-2019-thirty-second-sunday-ordinary-time?site_redirect=1>

**Prayer of Jesus -** <https://www.minnesotaumc.org/>

**Enduring Blessing by Jan Richardson:** <https://m.facebook.com/JanRichardsonAuthor/photos/one-of-the-things-i-quickly-learned-after-gary-died-was-that-death-has-a-way-of-/1915038845482152/?locale2=el_GR>