

Solidarity with Sisters' Communal Reflection and Prayer
On the Fifth Sunday of Lent 2020
In this Time of Coronavirus

TECHNICAL CHECK-IN (Betty) –

I'm Betty Thompson, and, for Solidarity with Sisters, I'm really happy to welcome you here today.

Mention number of people here, for those calling in by phone.

Mention Gallery View for those on Zoom.

Check that everyone knows how to mute themselves, on phone or Zoom.

Now let's put technical things aside and just be here together.

INTRODUCTION (Suzie)

I'm Suzie De Quattro. Betty and I and the readers are members of Solidarity with Sisters. We are a group of lay women and men who began meeting in 2012 with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

Throughout this time of prayer today, we will pause together in sacred silence. So let's get settled as we prepare to begin. This is a time when we're all aware of our breath. Breathing problems are often associated with the coronavirus. And so, in solidarity, sit comfortably, notice your breath as it goes in and out. Become aware of divine presence in you and around you.

We begin with 3 deep breaths. One to be here... one to be together... and one to create space for the Holy Spirit.

CALL TO WORSHIP (Suzie)

We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as people of God and body of Christ. We gather to remember that God is in love with us. Jesus told us that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he is right here in the midst of us. We pray that our time together this morning strengthens us and opens us to whatever God wants to be born in us.

GATHERING PRAYER (Suzie)

O God who creates and who gives breath,
 be with us now as we come to you
 with the great longings of our world
 and of our selves.

We come together
 trusting that the Spirit will be at work in us
 during this time of coronavirus,
 and during this Lenten season of conversion
 for transformation.

Help us to let go and to let come.

Help us to live the questions
 and to move with you, in you, and toward you,
 ever open to what is waiting to be born in us.

Let's let space for God grow in us as Stu Sklamm plays a gentle sax solo.

REFLECTIVE MUSIC (Stu)

READINGS

Suzie: Today we'll reflect first with a poem. Then we'll interweave the psalm and the Gospel, followed by a reflection on the Gospel. After each reading, you will have time to reflect on what you have heard. After that, we will have time for sharing.

So let us listen together as Joan Sklamm reads a poem by Muriel Rukeyser.

Reading 1: MURIEL RUKEYSER "POEM" (Joan)

I lived in the first century of world wars.
 Most mornings I would be more or less insane,
 The newspapers would arrive with their careless stories,

The news would pour out of various devices
 Interrupted by attempts to sell products to the unseen.
 I would call my friends on other devices;
 They would be more or less mad for similar reasons.
 Slowly I would get to pen and paper,
 Make my poems for others unseen and unborn.
 In the day I would be reminded of those men and women,
 Brave, setting up signals across vast distances,
 Considering a nameless way of living, of almost unimagined values.
 As the lights darkened, as the lights of night brightened,
 We would try to imagine them, try to find each other,
 To construct peace, to make love, to reconcile
 Waking with sleeping, ourselves with each other,
 Ourselves with ourselves. We would try by any means
 To reach the limits of ourselves, to reach beyond ourselves,
 To let go the means, to wake.

Silence (Suzie)

Before the silence: Let us take a little time to notice what feels true in that poem for you as you are today.

Now Ann Jelen and Bob Gallagher will read the story of Lazarus from the 11th chapter of the Gospel of John, with a repeated refrain. Our refrain will be: "Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord." (Unmute if a small number.)

Reading: The Gospel of John (Ann and Bob)

Reader 1:

Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany,
 the village of Mary and her sister Martha.
 Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil
 and dried his feet with her hair;
 it was her brother Lazarus who was ill.

So the sisters sent word to him saying,
"Master, the one you love is ill."
When Jesus heard this he said,
"This illness is not to end in death,
but is for the glory of God,
that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

Refrain: Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord. Remember
your people, and have mercy on us, Lord.

Reader 2:

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.
So when he heard that he was ill,
he remained for two days in the place where he was.
Then after this he said to his disciples,
"Let us go back to Judea."
The disciples said to him,
"Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you,
and you want to go back there?"
Jesus answered,
"Are there not twelve hours in a day?
If one walks during the day, he does not stumble,
because he sees the light of this world.
But if one walks at night, he stumbles,
because the light is not in him."

He said this, and then told them,
"Our friend Lazarus is asleep,
but I am going to awaken him."
So the disciples said to him,
"Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved."
But Jesus was talking about his death,
while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep.
So then Jesus said to them clearly,

"Lazarus has died.

And I am glad for you that I was not there,
that you may believe.

Let us go to him."

So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples,
"Let us also go to die with him."

Refrain: Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord. Remember
your people, and have mercy on us, Lord.

Reader 1:

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus
had already been in the tomb for four days.

Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away.

And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary
to comfort them about their brother.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming,
she went to meet him;
but Mary sat at home.

Martha said to Jesus,

"Lord, if you had been here,
my brother would not have died.

But even now I know that whatever you ask of God,
God will give you."

Jesus said to her,

"Your brother will rise."

Martha said to him,

"I know he will rise,
in the resurrection on the last day."

Jesus told her,

"I am the resurrection and the life;
whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,
and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.
Do you believe this?"

She said to him, "Yes, Lord.

I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God,
the one who is coming into the world."

Refrain: Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord. Remember
your people, and have mercy on us, Lord.

Reader 2:

When she had said this,

she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying,
"The teacher is here and is asking for you."

As soon as she heard this,
she rose quickly and went to him.

For Jesus had not yet come into the village,
but was still where Martha had met him.

So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her
saw Mary get up quickly and go out,
they followed her,

presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him,
she fell at his feet and said to him,

"Lord, if you had been here,
my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping,
he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said,

"Where have you laid him?"

They said to him, "Sir, come and see."

And Jesus wept.

So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." But some of them said,

"Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man
have done something so that this man would not have died?"

Refrain: Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord. Remember
your people, and have mercy on us, Lord.

Reader 1:

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb.

It was a cave, and a stone lay across it.

Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him,

"Lord, by now there will be a stench;

he has been dead for four days."

Jesus said to her,

"Did I not tell you that if you believe

you will see the glory of God?"

So they took away the stone.

And Jesus raised his eyes and said,

"Father, I thank you for hearing me.

I know that you always hear me;

but because of the crowd here I have said this,

that they may believe that you sent me."

And when he had said this,

He cried out in a loud voice,

"Lazarus, come out!"

The dead man came out,

tied hand and foot with burial bands,

and his face was wrapped in a cloth.

So Jesus said to them,

"Untie him and let him go."

Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary

and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

Refrain: Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord. Remember
your people, and have mercy on us, Lord.

SILENCE (Suzie)

Before the silence – Let us take a little time to reflect on the Gospel, noticing which part of the story draws you most strongly.

After the silence –

I will read a reflection from Krista Chincilla at Catholic Women Preach. Then we will pause for reflection after each of the three questions. After the final silence, we will have time to share our own reflections.

Reading: REFLECTION QUESTIONS from Krista Chincilla (Suzie)

Jesus was moved and deeply troubled. And Jesus wept. Do we recognize Jesus weeping with us? From there, where do we take that grief?

Silence (about a minute)

We are called to be the hands and feet of Christ, so when we cry out “Lord, if only you had been here...,” well, is he not already present within us, calling us to act?

Silence (about a minute)

After Jesus weeps with us, we must ask ourselves how Jesus is crying out to us “my dear, beloved friend, come out! Untie yourself.” What do we need to do to untie ourselves? What is it that keeps us bound?

SILENCE (Suzie)

SHARING (Suzie)

That sharing time was so meaningful last week. Sharing our faith matters. Expressing our faith – and our questions, too – let’s each of us more clearly see ourselves individually, and we also see ourselves together, as a community where God is alive and active. We recognize ourselves as the body of Christ.

In just a moment, I’ll invite you to share a few words from your reflection.

After we listen to everyone's individual reflections, I will ask if someone would be willing to express what you heard as a sense of the whole –to pull together our individual reflections into some unity, so we can recognize how the Spirit is moving in our community this morning.

If you would like to speak, you will need to unmute yourself on your phone or in Zoom. After you speak, please mute yourself again. It will be a lot like at a dinner table -- if more than one person speaks at once, some will need to wait.

(Sharing)

OUR COMMUNAL PREACHING/REVELATION THIS MORNING (Suzie)

Has everyone spoken who wishes to?... Thank you.

Would someone be willing to express what you heard as a sense of the whole — to pull together our individual reflections into some unity, so we can recognize how the Spirit is moving in our community this morning?

Thank you. I have a real sense of us at this moment as the body of Christ. What an enormous gift!

INTENTION (Betty)

Let us pray together that we may untie ourselves
so that we are free to be the hands and feet of Christ –
so that we may see all that is with God's eyes,
which are always and only full of love –
so that we may hold the world and ourselves in love.

Now Lynn Bufka will lead us in prayer.

If your phone or computer is muted, you can respond aloud:

Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL (Lynn)

1. Loving God, we offer to you ourselves and our sharing. Make us truly your Body. For this we pray. (Pause.) Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord.
2. With the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, we are heartbroken by the myriad ways our one human family and Earth, our common home, suffer from disconnection, indifference, violence, and fear. You love all of creation into being. We pray that we will create communion and examine the root causes of the tragedies and injustices of our time, looking at how their roots intersect. For this we pray. (Pause.) Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord.
3. For all those directly impacted by the coronavirus crisis, we pray. (Pause.) Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord.
4. For people who are in fear in these unsettled times, we pray. (Pause.) Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord.
5. For our families and those who are dear to us, we pray. (Pause.) Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord.
6. For the strength and wisdom we individually and collectively need for this time, we pray. (Pause.) Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord.
7. For leaders nearby and worldwide to act with wisdom and with care for the vulnerable, we pray. (Pause.) Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord.

Betty:

For what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself as you speak. Please end your petition with “for this we pray.” R. Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord.

We place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care, and we entrust the outcome to you. As we do, we use the words of Sister Sharlet Wagner. We thank you, God, that “It is not ours to see the future. Our task is not to create a plan for the new to emerge. It is to create a space for the new to emerge. For the young. For the growing diversities. A space where the Holy Spirit is free to work. If we can do this, the future will emerge. And it will be good.” Amen.

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Betty)

Today we are not able to share in the physical breaking of bread and sharing of the cup.

But let's remember that
 on the night before he died
 the first thing Jesus did was to give thanks.
 The word Eucharist is a Greek word for thanksgiving.
 So let us pause
 and know that God is among us
 and give thanks.

(Silence.)

And then Jesus, who was having dinner with his friends,
 looked at what was in front of him, the bread and the cup,
 and he blessed it.
 So let us, too,
 look at what is front and center in our lives
 and bless it.
 Let us pause to invite God right now
 into what is front and center in our lives
 and know that God will indeed enter our space – and bless it.

(Silence.)

We thank God that through Christ we share in divine life.
We invite God's Spirit to fill us with blessing.

Alive in God's presence,
let us ourselves be bread for the world,
from our own newly cloistered places.
O gracious Mystery that we name God,
may we create space within ourselves
for your creativity and your peace,
so that we can share with the world
your abundant and transforming love.

Perhaps every time we break bread this week,
every time we eat or drink,
we can remember our communion with God and with each other.
Every time we take in food,
we can recognize that this is communion with all creation
as other living beings become part of our own bodies.

Let us pause to take in the gift of God's life in us and among us.

(Silence.)

OUR FATHER (Betty)

Now let's pray in harmony with all Christians throughout the world in the words
that Jesus taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy 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,
for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

As we close our prayer this morning,
we thank God for bringing us together across distance.
In the hope that we are creating space in ourselves
where the Spirit is free to act, let's join in prayer.

(All) Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of
your love. Send forth your spirit and we shall be created. And you shall renew
the face of the earth. Amen.

Let us now go forth in peace:
in communion with each other
and offering communion to a hungry world. Amen.

CLOSING SONG: Amazing Grace

(What we learned about music:

1. Find online instructions (youtube, etc.) on how the music leader should modify their Zoom settings so that Zoom accepts the music as raw sound instead of optimizing for spoken language.
2. For singing together – everybody on mute except the lead singer.