

**Solidarity with Sisters' Communal Reflection and Prayer
Easter 2020**

TECHNICAL CHECK-IN (Betty) –

I'm Betty Thompson and I welcome you here on behalf of Solidarity with Sisters.

Yay to any Easter bonnets! We're here to celebrate!

Have a candle, candleholder, and matches?

We sent the files of readings, responses, and music.

Zoom: turn on cameras - Gallery view option.

Mute: know how? On phone? On Zoom? Needed even during singing.

Now let's put technical things aside and begin.

GREETING (Suzie)

Suzie: Let us rejoice, for Jesus Christ is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!

All: He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

FANFARE: Jesus Christ Is Risen Today, Alleluia! **(Stu Sklamm on tenor sax)**

WELCOME

I'm Suzie De Quattro. Betty and I and the readers are members of Solidarity with Sisters. We're delighted to join in prayer with you for Easter! [If there are a number of new people: We are a group of lay women and men who began meeting in 2012 with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious....]

For those who haven't been with us before – Throughout our celebration today, we will pause together in sacred silence. So let's get settled as we prepare to begin. Settle into a comfortable position. 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 joy of God alive among us!

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 in this strange and often difficult time, our time together this morning will be radiant with the light of Christ!

In the light of Christ, let's light our candles now.

GATHERING PRAYER (Jim De Quattro)

O God who makes all things new,
we thank you for the gift of your son Jesus,
the light of the world,
alive among us.
Now, as we light our candles,
we ask you to transform us
so that we shine with your radiance.
We ask you to illuminate the entire world
with the love you pour out on us.
May the brilliance of Christ's presence
help us to see with your eyes,
to let go and to let come,
and to move with you, in you, and toward you,
ever open to what is waiting to be born in us. (Pause.)

Let's listen as Lynn Bufka reads from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

READING FROM CORINTHIANS: 1 Corinthians 5:6B-8 (Lynn)

Sisters and brothers, do you not realize that only a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Throw out the old yeast so that you can be the fresh dough, unleavened as you are. For our Passover has been sacrificed, that is, Christ. Let us keep the feast, then, with none of the old yeast and no leavening of evil and wickedness, but only the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

SILENCE (Betty)

Before the silence: Let's take a little time with this. If we are the fresh dough, how are we making ourselves available for God's action, so God can shape us into bread for the world? How do we make ourselves available to God?

After the silence: With ourselves on mute, let's join Reggie Ott in singing the Psalm, and then listen to Mary Ott read from the Gospel of John.

PSALM: This is the day that the Lord has made! (Reggie)

Refrain: This is the day that the Lord has made!
 Let us rejoice and be glad!
 This is the day that the Lord has made!
 Let us rejoice! Let us rejoice and be glad!

GOSPEL READING: John 20:1-9 (Mary)

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb. She came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb," she said, "and we don't know where they have put him."

So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first. He bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter, following him, also came up, went into the tomb, saw the linen cloths lying on the ground and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed.

Till this moment they had still not understood the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. The disciples then went back home.

But Mary was standing outside near the tomb, weeping. Then, as she wept, she stooped to look inside, and saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, the other at the feet. They said, "Woman, why are you weeping?" "They have taken my Lord away," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

As she said this she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him." Jesus said, "Mary!" She turned round then and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbuni!" -- which means Master. Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

So Mary of Magdala told the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that he had said these things to her.

SILENCE (Betty)

Before the silence: Mary recognizes Jesus when he speaks her name. Both Jesus and her relationship with Jesus are alive and well! Let's pause with this. Has your

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relationship with God ever come back from the dead? What does it mean to experience God speaking your name?

After the silence: Let's listen as Jim De Quattro reads a reflection on the Gospel by Sister Helen Prejean, whose work with death-row prisoners is the subject of the book and movie *Dead Man Walking*. Is there a part of this reflection that draws you in?

READING: SCRIPTURAL REFLECTION BY SISTER HELEN PREJEAN (Jim)

There are no direct witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus. If there had been a video camera outside the tomb that night and early Easter morning, it would have shown things just as they were. There is no direct evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus, because it's not about that level of experience; the Resurrection is about the mysterious level of experience in our spiritual-mystical lives. It is about how, even though we die, we can live; and how death doesn't have the final word.

As I was growing up, my first understandings of the Resurrection of Jesus were that Jesus rose from the dead. And the apostles were the witnesses and they passed it on to us. And later [I came] to say, "Well, wait, what does my faith depend on? What does Resurrection really mean?" And it was very much for me an individualistic thing. I'd be in heaven somewhere in glory. But I'm just basically not going to change drastically, I'm just going to be me... an individualistic approach to religion.

But over the years, as the community has reflected, we have moved away from that individualistic conception of resurrection and the afterlife into one of personal transformation, of being able to move past our ego and our selfishness into a state of love and into a state of community.

It's interesting that the first Resurrection appearance in art was Jesus, the individual, rising. But in the Eastern Church, the art always manifested early on with Jesus rising bringing humanity along with him. That's more the Eastern frame of mind: that when we rise, we rise together.

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SILENCE (Betty)

Before the silence: In quiet, I invite you to consider the communal dimension of what Sister Helen describes. How do we change if we “move past our ego and our selfishness” and enter into a new place, “a state of love and a state of community”? What does it mean to you, that “when we rise, we rise together”?

SILENCE

SHARING (Betty)

In just a moment, I will invite you to share your reflections. God is alive and active in this community, and we can expand upon what we see individually as we listen to each other.

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. If more than one person speaks at once, one will go first and the other will speak after that.

Who would like to begin our sharing?

(Sharing)

THE WORD OF GOD AMONG US ALL TODAY (Betty)

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

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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 the meaning of the word of God to us and in us this morning?

Thank you.

Now Joan Sklamm will lead us in prayer.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL (Joan)

Let us pray in the joy and the hope of the resurrection! Our words come from the Exsultet, the great hymn of Easter midnight mass as the Paschal candle is lighted. .

May our night become as bright as day, dazzling and full of gladness!

May the power of Christ's resurrection saturate us and our world,
dispel wickedness, wash faults away,
restore innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners,
drive out hatred, foster just and peaceful harmony,
and transform those who put their trust in might.

If your phone or computer is muted, you can respond aloud with: Risen Savior, Hear our prayer.

We rejoice in the companions with whom we share the joy of Easter – each other, those we love, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and Christians all over the world. Bless them and keep them, O God. For this we pray. (Pause.) Risen Savior, Hear our prayer.

We rejoice in the solidarity with vulnerable people and the thoughtful, often valiant generosity that we see in so many places and people during this pandemic. Let these

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seeds of goodness flourish in us, in our country, and throughout the world, O God. For this we pray. (Pause.) Risen Savior, Hear our prayer.

Betty:

Let's pause to remember the feelings and prayers that rose up in us in our shared reflections, and to be attentive to the prayers we carry with us. (Pause) Now, for what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself as you speak. Please end your petition with "for this we pray."

After each prayer: Response. Risen Savior, Hear our prayer.

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)

This morning we celebrate that Jesus who was lifted up on the cross has risen to new life and shares that new life with us.

As we enter into that new life,
we hold onto the journey we have shared with Jesus this past week.
We remember that on the night before he died,
the first thing Jesus did was to give thanks.
So let us, too, offer immense thanks
that God is pouring fresh life
into us and all around us. (Pause.)
Let us trust that God's vitality will burst forth

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in ways as wondrous and unexpected as resurrection.

Let us risk being bread for the world
to give ourselves to this transformation.

Let us give thanks for the communion we celebrate today
in which God gives us vision and discernment and courage and hope.
Let us pause to let all this sink into the marrow of our bones.

(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.

O gracious Mystery that we name God,
may we create space within ourselves
for wonder and joy even in these times,
and for your creativity and your peace,
so that we can share with the world
your abundant and transforming love.

(Pause.)

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 (Andy)

At each gathering during this past holy week,

we have said that our prayer that day didn't really come to an end

as we walked with Jesus from Palm Sunday through Holy Thursday and Good Friday to today.

O God of hope, God of transformation,

let our prayer together never come to an end

as we rejoice in you

and strengthen each other

to look at all that is with your eyes, which are always and only loving.

God of resurrection, we offer ourselves for transformation in you.

Betty: We close with a poem called "Seen – for Easter Day" by Jan Richardson:

You had not imagined
that something so empty
could fill you
to overflowing,

and now you carry
the knowledge
like an awful treasure
or like a child
that curls itself
within your heart:
how the emptiness
will bear forth

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a new world
you cannot fathom
but on whose edge
you stand.

So why do you linger?
You have seen,
and so you are
already blessed.
You have been seen,
and so you are
the blessing.

There is no other word
you need.
There is simply
to go
and tell.
There is simply
to begin.

—Jan Richardson

from [*Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*](#)

And now – a recording of Fr. Glen singing the song that many of us have shared for decades of Easters.

CLOSING SONG: Audio of Fr. Glen singing Resurrection

After first and second verses:

For her life was changed, not ended.
Her voice still hummed softly with her
song.
And her heart, though slowed and quiet,
Still waited for the Spring
And the new life that would bring
Resurrection.

After third verse:

For our lives are changed, not ended.
Our voice still hums softly with God's song.
And our hearts, though slowed and quiet,
Are waiting for the Spring
And the new life that God brings
In Resurrection.