

SOLIDARITY WITH SISTERS' SUNDAY SERVICE – MAY 24, 2020

WELCOME (Suzie DeQuattro)

- Introductions – people who haven't been here before?
- The liturgy for today was prepared by Richard McGinnis. Thank you!
- Thanks for Stu Sklamm and Reggie Ott, who will lead us in music today, and for Alice McGinnis, who created the piano accompaniment for the song Reggie will lead.
- Thanks for our leaders and readers today – Richard, Lynn Bufka, Kate Finan, and Mary Ott.
- If you would like to be a reader, please get in touch.
- And, if you would like to prepare a future Sunday liturgy, we would be happy to coordinate with you. Give us a call.

SETTLING IN (Richard)

As we prepare to begin, let's move from arriving here to being here. Settle into a comfortable position. Notice your breath as it goes in and out. Become aware of divine presence in you and around you.

Now take 3 deep breaths. One to be here... one to be together... and one to create space for God alive among us!

Now Stu Sklamm will lead us in a musical introduction to our celebration.

MUSICAL OPENING – GATHER US IN (Stu Sklamm)

GREETING (Richard)

Let us rejoice for Jesus Christ is alive and among us! Alleluia! Alleluia!

All: And all God's people reply: Alleluia! Alleluia!

CALL TO WORSHIP (Richard)

Jesus told us that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he is among us. We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as people of God and the body of Christ. Mindful that God is in love with us and that the Spirit of God is within us, we pray that our time together will be radiant with the light of Christ. Amen.

GATHERING PRAYER (Richard)

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 Easter season
that pulls us into resurrection together.
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.

SHOW IMAGE (Betty)



The Ascension, Russian, Novgorod School

http://www.edgeofenclosure.org/images/450_ascensionRussianNovgorodSchool.jpg

INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Richard)

The Scripture readings today are from Acts 1:1-11 and the Gospel of John 17:10. The initial verses of Acts are Trinitarian. There are references to Jesus, to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit. The verses underscore the nature of divine life—especially that it is and will be everlasting. The relationship to Jesus with the apostles did not end with his death.

After his passion, we learn from Scripture that Jesus gave many proofs to the apostles that he was alive. He ate with them. He spoke with them. They observed him being taken up before their very eyes. And, angels appeared and foretold that the same Jesus would come back.

While Jesus gives proofs that he remains alive, the Ascension is not a time without significant change. On the contrary, it marks a momentous transition. During his time on earth, Jesus was the doer and teacher. In Acts, he reveals to the apostles that they will be his successors in ministry.

In this new circumstance, they will not be alone. In this Scripture, Jesus does two things to prepare the apostles. He reveals that he is alive by accompanying them after the crucifixion. And, Jesus tells the apostles that they will receive a gift from his Father.

Baptized by the Holy Spirit, the apostles will receive power. With that power, they will be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. As the Annunciation foretells the birth of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Ascension foretells the birth of his followers as his instruments of earthly ministry.

Transitions can be awkward and unwelcome. Consequently, they call upon our capacity for hope as we move forward into the future. As Father Paul Turner notes in a homily on the Ascension:

“When Jesus ascended into heaven, his disciples stood flatfooted between goodbye and hello, between past and future....The ascension was a commencement, though not a welcome one. The disciples had grown attached to their teacher, and they did not feel ready to step into the future on their own....the transitional time between the Ascension

and Pentecost probably felt awkward. We all face transitional times in our lives, times for which we may never feel completely prepared....Transitional moments bring an awkward feeling because we don't yet know how they're going to turn out - for good or for ill, for better or for worse. But we still go forward in hope." "Ascension," May 28, 2017, homily by Father Paul Turner, [Homilies A-2017](http://paulturner.org), paulturner.org

END IMAGE (Betty)

SHOW NEXT IMAGE (Betty)



The Ascension, Master Thomas de Coloswar, 1427

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READING 1 – SCRIPTURE FROM ACTS AND JOHN (Richard McGinnis and Kate Finan)

Richard: Kate Finan will read from Acts and from the Gospel of John.

Kate:

From the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles:

In my earlier work, Theophilus, I dealt with everything Jesus had done and I taught from the beginning until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven.

He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God. When he had been at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. 'It is,' he had said, 'what you have heard me speak about:

John baptized with water but you, not many days from now, will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

Now having met together, they asked him, 'Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'

He replied, 'It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth'.

As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight.

They were still staring into the sky when suddenly two men in white were standing near them and they said, 'Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking into the sky? Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, this same Jesus will come back in the same way as you have seen him go there.'

From the 17th Chapter of the Gospel of John:

After saying this, Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said...I am not in the world any longer, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us.

END OF IMAGE (Betty)

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The Ascension by Jacques Chaillet

REFLECTION QUESTIONS ON SCRIPTURE (Jim De Quattro)

What signs do you see that Jesus Christ is alive today?

While shattered and grieving the death of Jesus, the apostles are confronted with news that they will be given responsibility for continuing his earthly ministry--empowered by the Holy Spirit. Who or what gave you strength to navigate a time of unsettling change in your life?

Jesus refuses to answer the question of the apostles whether the time has come for the restoration of the kingdom. The future that Jesus has in mind is not one of certainty, but of the apostles becoming his witnesses through the power of the Holy Spirit. Has the Spirit ever moved you in a surprising direction, or perhaps a direction different than the one you imagined?

SILENCE (Sound chime after 2 minutes – Suzie)

END IMAGE (Betty)

READING 2--REFLECTION READING FROM A DAILY MEDITATION BY RICHARD ROHR

[For reference, not to be read aloud: "Liminal Paradox", April 29, 2020, [Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation from the Center for Action and Contemplation, cac.org](#)]

(Richard McGinnis and Mary Ott)

Richard: Mary Ott will now read a reflection by Father Richard Rohr.

Mary:

Father Richard Rohr calls periods of transition "liminal space." In the following meditation, Rohr quotes editor and author, Sheryl Fullerton, whose life was shaken in a painful and challenging way by a diagnosis of cancer. Fullerton's experience taught her that the key to our moving through darkness into an unknown future is pausing, being still, and attending--so as to feel the movement of the Holy Spirit within us. She writes:

“When we find ourselves in liminal space, does it matter whether we are pushed or whether we jump? Either way, we are not where or what we were before, nor do we know how or where we will land in our new reality. We are, as the anthropologist Victor Turner (1920–1983) wrote, betwixt and between. In that space—which is mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual—we are destabilized, disoriented. The old touchstones, habits, and comforts are now past, the future unknown. We only wish such a time to be over. We may be impatient to pass through it quickly, with as little distress as possible, even though that is not likely. . . .

But what if we can choose to experience this liminal space and time, this uncomfortable now, as . . . a place and state of creativity, of construction and deconstruction, choice and transformation? I wonder whether it is, then, also the realm of the Holy Spirit, our comforter, who does not take away the vastness and possibility of this opened-up threshold time, but invites us to lay down our fears and discomfort to see what else is there, hard as that may be. . . .

One transformation in this liminal time of cancer treatment and recovery was my recognition that the staggering vulnerability I was experiencing was not weakness, not shameful, but the source of what would allow me to survive and, eventually, to thrive. I allowed others to see me—not just my broken, lopsided face, but also my pain, sorrow, disappointment, and discouragement, as well as my gratitude, resilience, joy, and recovery. . . .

Like Jonah in the belly of the sea monster, we are led where we do not want to go—not once, but many times in our lives. Dwelling in unsettling liminal space, whether we are pushed or we jump, we are led to draw on resources and possibilities we may not have tapped before. In the unknown space between here and there, younger and older, past and future, life happens. And, if we attend, we can feel the Holy Spirit moving with us in a way that we may not be aware of in more settled times. In liminal time and space, we can learn to let reality—even in its darkness—be our teacher, rather than living in the illusion that we are creating it on our own. We can enter into the liminal paradox: a disturbing time and space that not only breaks us down, but also offers us the choice to live in it with fierce aliveness, freedom, sacredness, companionship, and awareness of Presence.”

SHOW IMAGE (Betty)



Ascension © Jan Richardson. janrichardson.com

REFLECTION QUESTIONS ON MEDITATION (Jim)

Fullerton’s acceptance of her vulnerability and sharing it with others empowered her to survive and to thrive. How do you react to her proposition that there is a positive power in sharing vulnerability?

In various ways, we seem to be in the “belly of the sea monster” today. What vast possibilities do you see coming out of this current time of darkness?

SILENCE (Sound chime after 2 minutes – Suzie)

END IMAGE (Betty)

SHARING (Richard)

I invite you to share your reflections. Everyone’s individual reflections help us to glimpse the many ways God is among us.

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?

(PEOPLE SHARE)

Richard: Is there anyone else who would like to speak?

Thank you.

Now Lynn Bufka will lead us in prayer.

INTENTIONS (Lynn Bufka)

From today's Scriptures, we learn that we have been called to continue the ministry of Jesus as part of the body of Christ, that this call is challenging, but that we are not alone.

Our response to the Intentions will be: "Loving God, hear our prayer."

Lord, how we love certainty, control and calm; help us to surrender to change, vulnerability and anxiety with trust in your peace and with hope for a future that is yet unknown. (For this we pray.) (Loving God, hear our prayer.)

Lord, help us to take time to pause, to be still, and to experience the love with which you enfold us in order to open ourselves to change that will bring a new way of being. (For this we pray.) (Loving God, hear our prayer.)

Lord, accept our gratitude for the joy that comes from engaging in a holy way in new relationships and new undertakings as life proceeds in an unending process of creative evolution. (For this we pray.) (Loving God, hear our prayer.)

The leaders of Catholic sisters strive to support their congregations while continuing their service to others in this unprecedented time. (For all of them, we pray.) (Loving God, hear our prayer.)

[Pause.]

Now, for what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself as you speak. Please end your petition with "For this we pray."

(People offer prayers. When people are finished...)

Lynn: Amen.

Lynn: 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 (Lynn)

Like the early Christian community,
let’s keep ourselves open to the future emerging among us today.
Like the early church, let’s praise God and break bread together.

And so we remember the night before Jesus died.
The first thing Jesus did was to give thanks.
So let us know that God is among us
and give thanks. [Pause.]

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 them.
So let us, too, invite God right now
into what is front and center in our lives
and know that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it. [Pause.]

Enfolded in God’s love,
Let us risk being transformed into bread for the world.

OUR FATHER (Lynn)

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,
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

SCRIPTURE BEFORE FINAL CLOSING PRAYER (Richard)

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul prays that you, who are the body of the Church of which Jesus is the head, be given wisdom and perception, and enlightenment of mind:

“May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him.

May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power that he has exercised for us believers.

This you can tell from the strength of his power at work in Christ, when he used it to raise him from the dead and to make him sit at his right hand, in heaven, far above every Sovereignty, Authority, Power, or Domination, or any other name that can be named not only in this age but also in the age to come.

He has put all things under his feet and made him, as the ruler of everything, the head of the Church; which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation.” Eph. 1:17-23

CLOSING PRAYER (Richard)

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

CLOSING SONG: Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness (Reggie)

Reggie: Refrain

Spirit, spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness, calling and free.
Spirit, spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea.

All: Refrain

Spirit, spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness, calling and free.
Spirit, spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea.

Reggie:

You call from tomorrow;
you break ancient schemes;
from bondage of sorrow
the captives dream dreams.

Our women see visions;
our men clear their eyes.
With bold new decisions
Your people arise.

All: Refrain

Spirit, spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness, calling and free.
Spirit, spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea.

All: Encore Refrain

Spirit, spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness, calling and free.
Spirit, spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea.