**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, October 4, 2020,**

**27th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*“In God alone is my soul at rest” Psalm 62:6*

**WELCOME (Betty Thompson)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Suzie and I had the pleasure of preparing today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to Stu Sklamm, Linda Donaldson, and Reggie Ott for making us musical.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Richard McGinnis, Jim De Quattro, Paula Lake, Marilyn Voigt, Judy Sholes, Maryann Dolan, Charlotte Cook, and Mary Ott.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Suzie De Quattro)**

There is a lot for us to think about and pray about today. It is the Feast Day of St. Francis and the last day of the Season of Creation. We are adding a new feature during the offertory. And it is World Communion Sunday. So with all that in mind let's move from getting here to being here....

Settle into a comfortable position. Feel any tightness in your body and let your muscles loosen. Notice your thoughts and try to put aside those that distract you. Notice your breath as it goes in and out. As you exhale, let tensions leave you. As you inhale, feel God’s love flowing into you. And now let’s take 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together….and one to create space for how God will lead us today.

Now Stu Sklamm will lead us into our celebration.

**OPENING – ALL CREATURES OF OUR GOD AND KING by Francis of Assisi (Stu Sklamm)**

All creatures of our God and King
Lift up your voice and with us sing,
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou burning sun with golden beam,
Thou silver moon with softer gleam!

Refrain:
O praise God! O praise God!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Dear mother earth, who day by day
Unfoldest blessings on our way,
O praise God! Alleluia!
The flowers and fruits that in thee grow,
Let them God’s glory also show.

Refrain:
O praise God! O praise God!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**GREETING (Betty)**

Beloved Community, rejoice!The Spirit of Christ is among us! Alleluia!

**All:** And all God’s people reply: Amen! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Betty)**

We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as the people of God and the body of Christ. We gather to celebrate the great fact that God is in love with us. We are confident that in this next hour God will act in us and through us. We believe that God will give us light for our next step. And now let us pray.

**GATHERING PRAYER (Suzie)**

God of prophets, God of grace,

teach us how to be your community –

to see one another with your eyes of love

and to recognize what is ours to do in the world.

May we inquire, nudge, and challenge each other

to imagine what none us could conceive alone.

Amen.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Suzie)**

Today our readings urge us to find God’s peace in an apocalyptic time.

We are continuing today with the image of the vineyard. Isaiah invites us to see the beauty of creation in both the world around us and inside each of us. We are also challenged by the devastation that is occurring in the world and in ourselves. In the face of this pain we hear the message of Francis of Assisi to trust completely in God. And then Paul’s reminder that God wants us to be happy and promises us peace the passes all understanding.

Now Richard McGinnis will read from the 5th chapter of the book of Isaiah. Then Jim De Quattro will offer questions for our reflection.

**READING 1 – ISAIAH 5:1-7** **(Richard McGinnis) (Slides: Betty)**

Let me sing, my beloved, the song of my friend for his vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it, cleared it of stones, and planted it with red grapes. In the middle he built a tower, he hewed a wine press there, too. He expected it to yield fine grapes: but instead it yielded only wild grapes.

And now, citizens of Jerusalem and people of Judah, I ask you to judge between me and my vineyard. What could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done? Why, when I expected it to yield fine grapes, has it yielded wild ones?

Very well, I shall tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I shall take away its hedge, for it to be grazed on, I shall knock down its wall, for it to be trampled on. I shall let it go to waste, unpruned, undug, overgrown by brambles and thorn-bushes. I shall command the clouds not to rain on it.

Now, the vineyard of Yahweh is the House of Israel, and the people of Judah the plant God cherished. God expected fair judgement, but found injustice. God expected integrity, but only heard cries of distress.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro) (Slides - Betty)**

How do you feel as you gaze at the vineyard?

How are you grieving the condition of the vineyard?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime and stop slide after 2 minutes.) (Betty)**

Betty: Now Paula Lake will tell us about St. Francis of Assisi.

**READING 2 --** **FRANCIS OF ASSISI** **(Paula Lake) (Slide – Betty)**

Francis of Assisi died almost 800 years ago yesterday, on October 3, 1226. He grew up with plenty of everything, including friends. He loved having fun, but as a teen he also worked with his father in the family business, and later he went to war. Home again, maybe with PTSD, he wandered the hills around Assisi. God’s love became as real to him as the trees. One day when he was 23, he was praying in deep contemplation. He heard God say, “Don’t you see that my house has collapsed? Go and repair it for me.” Until his death 20 years later, Francis worked to revive a devastated vineyard.

At first, Francis and his friends physically rebuilt small chapels. Gradually he saw that the real problem was not run-down chapels. It was the people of God who were devastated. People were losing faith amid clerical scandals, constant small wars, big crusades, and political fights in the church and in society. (Does that sound familiar?) For the rest of his life, Francis put himself in the middle of the mess. He showed people that the world can change if we change.

His first step was a huge one. His father publicly disowned him, and Francis walked away literally naked. From then on, he chose poverty. His one and only job was to share the joyful fact that God is in love with us. At crossroads and in town squares, he talked about God and real life. This was not our current words, “live simply so that others may simply live.” This was “live simply and trust God, who loves you!”

Francis radiated the peace of God – the peace of loving relationship. He had lifetime BFFs, including St. Clare and other women. He honored “Brother Sun,” “Sister Moon, “Brother Wolf,” “Mother Earth,” “Sister Death.” He treated everyone kindly and graciously -- lepers and peasants, clerics and dukes, no matter whether he liked them or agreed with them.

Relying on God and loving everyone can sound like sweet platitudes. But it’s hard to actually do, even in small ways. And Francis did it in big ways. He negotiated with popes and kings to seek changes. He crossed battle lines for peace talks with the Sultan of Egypt. Francis never let normal boundaries stop him. In his 20 years on the road, thousands caught the spark of his love and joy. New life was sprouting in the devastated vineyard.

Like Francis, we realize that God’s vineyard has no fences. The world can change, our planet can thrive, if we live in that awareness. The change starts in us. Francis abandoned his comfortable life and walked into the future with naked love. Do we have enough confidence in God’s love to do that?

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro) (Slide – Betty)**

How would you feel walking with Francis, relying completely on God and sharing the joy of God’s love?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime and stop slide after 2 minutes.) (Betty)**

Betty: Now Marilyn Voigt will read from the 4th chapter of Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

**READING 3: PHILIPPIANS 4:4.,6-9 (Marilyn Voigt) (Slide -- Betty)**

I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness.



There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, sisters and brothers, fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is honorable, everything that is just and pure, everything that we find lovely and gracious, everything excellent and worthy of praise.

Keep on doing what you have learned and received in Christ. Then the God of peace will be with you.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro) (Slide-Betty)**

Find your place of peace that passes all understanding. Be in that place.

How does it feel to know that God wants you to be happy?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime and stop slide after 2 minutes.) (Betty)**

Betty: Now Judy Sholes will lead us in sharing reflections.

**SHARING TIME (Judy Sholes)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings. That helps us to glimpse the many ways God is among us. We welcome new voices, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

As you share your feelings, please use "I” or “me". And let's leave a bit of silence between speakers. A bridge of silence allows us to take in what was just said and gives others the chance to gather their feelings to share.

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. (Pause for 30 seconds.)

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

(Sharing)

Is there anyone else who would like to share? [Pause.]

Thank you.

Now Maryann Dolan will lead us in prayer.

**COMMUNITY PRAYERS (Maryann Dolan and Linda Donaldson)**

As we bring our prayers to God, we also know, with our brother Francis, that God alone is enough for us.

**Linda:** (singing refrain twice)

Let nothing trouble you or frighten you / For the one who has God, lacks nothing.

Let nothing trouble you or frighten you, / God Alone, God Alone, God Alone is enough.

**Maryann:** At the same time, we have just listened to Paul say that “if there is anything you need, pray for it.” So now we bring what is in our hearts to God. Our response will be: O you who love us, hear our prayer.

God of all gifts, we thank you for the amazing wonder of creation. We urgently ask you to unite us in wisdom and grace for the good of the Earth and for the family of creatures in which we are a part. For this we pray. O you who love us, hear our prayer.

God of healing, we pray for the health of our president and of people everywhere who are infected with COVID-19. God, you know that a terrible infection is also eating into the spirit of our nation. Please heal our spirit as well as the bodies of those who are ill. For this we pray. O you who love us, hear our prayer.

God of surprises, we think of how the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and all Catholic sisters are able to look at terrible challenges and find your grace. May we, with them, be prepared at all times for your gifts, and be ready for new ones, knowing that you are a thousand times more ready to give than we are to receive. For this we pray. O you who love us, hear our prayer.

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

(Shared prayers)

O you who fill us with peace even in difficult times, we place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care. We will do all we can to put our prayers into action – while entrusting the outcome to you. Amen.

**OFFERING/STEWARDSHIP (Suzie and Charlotte Cook)**

**Suzie:** Often, through our shared reflections, we discern a call to take some kind of action. Today we have asked Charlotte Cook to tell us about one of the ways she is working in the vineyard.

**Charlotte** speaks.

**Suzie:** Let us now take time to name within ourselves something we will offer to others in recognition of all that we have received from God. [Pause.]

In thanksgiving for the presence and power of Jesus Christ, and in unity with the Holy Spirit, let us pray. God of abundance, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so we that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Mary Ott)**

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 give you thanks for your presence in us. [Pause.]

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.

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and 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.]

Let us invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence. [Pause.]

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Mary Ott)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands to pray in harmony with Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus gave us:

**All (muted):** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Your kingdom come. Your 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.

**WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY (Suzie)**

Today Christian churches everywhere celebrate World Communion Sunday. Let us pray with them now as we await the day when all will join at the same table.

**All (muted):**

Make us a world that grows into the shape of your communion table,

where all are welcomed and all are fed.

Make us a people who grow your family

by practices of mutuality, generosity and justice.

And may we be found to be witnesses, when Jesus returns,

to the truth of who we were created to be —

people who belong to each other,

people who belong to you, O God,

in your Son, Jesus. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Betty)**

While we keep ourselves muted, let us reach out our hands and bless each other:

**All:**

May we fill our minds

with everything that is true and honorable,

just and pure, lovely and gracious.

And then may the peace of God

that surpasses all understanding

guard our hearts and minds

in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

**CLOSING SONG --** Canticle of the Sun – Marty Haugen **(Reggie Ott)**

Refrain: The heavens are telling the glory of God,

And all creation is shouting for joy!
Come, dance in the forest, come, play in the field,
And sing, sing to the glory of the Lord!

Praise for the wind
That blows through the trees,
The seas' mighty storms, the gentlest breeze;
They blow where they will,
They blow where they please
To please the Lord! Refrain

Praise for the rain
That waters our fields,
And blesses our crops
So all the earth yields;
From death unto life her mystery revealed
Springs forth in joy! Refrain

**RESOURCES:**

Isaiah: <https://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?id=29&bible_chapter=5>

*Francis of Assisi, A Revolutionary Life*, by Adrian House (2001) (Betty loved this book.)

<https://www.amazon.com/Francis-Assisi-Revolutionary-Adrian-House/dp/1587680270>

Sister Ramona Miller, OSF, at Catholic Women Preach

<https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/10042020>

Sister Mary McGlone, CSJ, 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time:

2020: <https://www.ncronline.org/sunday-resource/oct-4-2020-twenty-seventh-sunday-ordinary-time>

2017: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/scripture-life/twenty-seventh-sunday-ordinary-time-0>

Fresco of Francis’ “sermon to the birds,” by Giotto, Basilica of St. Francis, Assisi, Italy

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<https://www.janrichardson.com/artprints>

Resources for World Communion Sunday 2020

<https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/page/worship-world-communion-sunday-2020/>