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Solidarity with Sisters' Communal Reflection and Prayer **Palm Sunday – Lent 2020**

TECHNICAL CHECK-IN

I'm Betty Thompson and I welcome you here on behalf of Solidarity with Sisters. We sent the files of readings, responses, and music to our regular list... Everybody know how to mute yourself – on phone or on Zoom? Now let's put technical things aside and just be here together.

INTRODUCTION

I'm Suzie De Quattro. Betty and I and all 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. Through our experiences together, we've come to value a more contemplative way of presence and of prayer. So 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 to surprise 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 our time together this morning strengthens us and opens us to whatever God wants to be born in us this week as we walk the path from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem today, through to his last supper, his death, and his resurrection.

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 pause to welcome God's presence. That's what Palm Sunday is about,
right? – welcoming God who comes to us. Today we have no palms to lay down
before Jesus. What is it that you might want to lay down to create a welcoming
path for Jesus to enter this time?

SILENCE**READINGS**

Betty: Today is Palm Sunday. Today we'll focus on Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.
We will take the first steps of the long journey that unfolds through this holy
week. We'll begin with a reading from Isaiah and then take a more meditative
route into the Gospel, so that we really become part of it. After that, we'll have
time for sharing our own reflections, prayers of the faithful, and celebration of
our communion.

So let us listen together as Joan Sklamm reads from the 50th chapter of Isaiah.

Reading 1: ISAIAH 50:4-5, 10 (Joan)

The Lord Yahweh has given me
a disciple's tongue
so that I may know how to reply to the wearied
with a word that will waken them.

Each morning God wakes me to hear,
to listen like a disciple.
The Lord Yahweh has opened my ear.
For my part, I did not resist
and I did not turn away.

Let anyone among you who holds Yahweh in awe
listen to the voice of God's servant!
Whoever walks in darkness
and has no light shining for them,
let them trust in the name of Yahweh,
let them lean on our God.

Silence (Betty)

We will take a different approach to the Gospel as we begin Holy Week. We're focusing on the story of the entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, with confidence that we'll all find ways to walk the rest of Holy Week journey, too. We're thinking of possibilities to do that with you, if you want.

So today – First we'll read a reflection that helps create context for the Gospel. Then Reggie Ott will lead us in singing "Ride On, Jesus, Ride!" – and we know more about how to do that than we did last week! Then we'll read the Gospel three times. The repeated readings are akin to Lecio Divina, if you're familiar with that way of contemplation. After each of the three readings of the Gospel, we will pause with a question, to let us enter more and more deeply into what the Gospel is offering us.

Now Mary Ott will read an opening reflection on the Gospel from Sister Mary McGlone in NCR.

Reading: PALM SUNDAY REFLECTION BY SISTER MARY McGLONE IN NCR (Mary)

Pilgrims had made their way to Jerusalem, the Holy City, for the feast of Passover. They were a diverse group: some more pious than others, some experts in the traditions, and others who had barely heard the stories. Then Jesus, the popular prophet, appeared among them, not on pilgrim's feet, but riding a foal and thus fulfilling the words of the prophet Zechariah: "Behold: your king is coming to you, a just savior is he, humble, and riding on a donkey."

As soon as somebody caught on to the symbolism, the excitement spread like wildfire, and suddenly there was a triumphant procession with wildly enthusiastic singing and escalating expressions of homage. The multitude, already in a holiday mood, began to chant a song that echoed the hymn angels sang at Jesus' birth.

The people seemed to consider Jesus a superstar. Like many who can quote much of the Bible and still assiduously avoid its potential to implicate them, they sang their hosannas and marched with exuberance. But when night came, and the star fell, their enthusiasm waned more quickly than the moonlight. Their proclamations of faith retreated into silence about the king who had come in the name of the Lord.

Silence (Betty)

Before the silence: Let's take a little time to notice what words of this reflection seem written just for you.

After the silence: Now we're ready to enter into Jerusalem with Jesus. Remember the joy of the crowd that welcomed him? Their eagerness for him? Remember how we would wave our palms at mass? So – this is when to get out your scarves or whatever you want to wave! Reggie Ott is going to lead us in the song "Ride On, Jesus, Ride!" Sing along, even tho our phones will be muted!

Song: Ride On, Jesus, Ride! (Reggie)

Betty: Now Stu Sklamm will read the Gospel for the first of three times.

Reading: FIRST READING OF THE GOSPEL (Matthew 21:1-11) (Stu)

When Jesus and the disciples were near Jerusalem.
 Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them,
 "Go into the village facing you,
 and you will immediately find a tethered donkey,
 and a foal with her.
 Untie them and bring them here to me.
 And if anyone says anything to you,
 you are to answer,
 'The master needs them and will send them back directly.'
 This took place to fulfill the prophecy:
Say to the daughter of Zion,
"Look, your king comes to you.
He is humble and riding on a donkey,
a beast of burden."

So the disciples went and did as Jesus had told them.
 They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their cloaks over the donkey, and
 he sat on it.

Great crowds of people spread their cloaks on the road,
 while others were cutting branches from the trees
 and spreading them in his path.
 The crowds who went in front of him and those following
 were all shouting:
 "Hosanna to the Son of David!
 Blessed is the he who comes in the name of the Lord!
 Hosanna in the highest heavens!"

And when he entered Jerusalem
 the whole city was in turmoil.
 "Who is this?" people asked,
 And the crowds answered,
 "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

Silence (Betty)

Before the silence: Let's take a little time with ourselves and with God, asking what this Gospel says to me and my life right now.

After the silence: Let's listen as Lynn Bufka reads the Gospel a second time, noticing if we feel a connection to any character in the story, whether it's a person or animal or object.

Reading: SECOND READING OF THE GOSPEL (Matthew 21:1-11) (Lynn)

When Jesus and the disciples were near Jerusalem.
 Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them,
 "Go into the village facing you,
 and you will immediately find a tethered donkey,
 and a foal with her.
 Untie them and bring them here to me.
 And if anyone says anything to you,
 you are to answer,
 'The master needs them and will send them back directly.'
 This took place to fulfill the prophecy:
Say to the daughter of Zion,
"Look, your king comes to you.
He is humble and riding on a donkey,
a beast of burden."

So the disciples went and did as Jesus had told them.
 They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their cloaks over the donkey, and

he sat on it.

Great crowds of people spread their cloaks on the road,
while others were cutting branches from the trees
and spreading them in his path.

The crowds who went in front of him and those following
were all shouting:

“Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heavens!”

And when he entered Jerusalem
the whole city was in turmoil.

“Who is this?” people asked,

And the crowds answered,

“This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Silence (Betty)

Before the silence: Let us take a little time to put ourselves into the place of one of the characters, human or not, in the story, and to feel the meaning of being there. As we enter this silence, consider the Gospel from the perspective of that character.

After the silence: Let’s listen as Richard McGinnis reads the Gospel a third time, noticing a word or phrase that feels especially meaningful to you at this moment.

Reading: THIRD READING OF THE GOSPEL (Matthew 21:1-11) (Richard)

When Jesus and the disciples were near Jerusalem.

Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them,

“Go into the village facing you,

and you will immediately find a tethered donkey,

and a foal with her.

Untie them and bring them here to me.
 And if anyone says anything to you,
 you are to answer,
 ‘The master needs them and will send them back directly.’”
 This took place to fulfill the prophecy:
Say to the daughter of Zion,
“Look, your king comes to you.
He is humble and riding on a donkey,
a beast of burden.”

So the disciples went and did as Jesus had told them.
 They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their cloaks over the donkey, and
 he sat on it.

Great crowds of people spread their cloaks on the road,
 while others were cutting branches from the trees
 and spreading them in his path.
 The crowds who went in front of him and those following
 were all shouting:
 “Hosanna to the Son of David!
 Blessed is the he who comes in the name of the Lord!
 Hosanna in the highest heavens!”

And when he entered Jerusalem
 the whole city was in turmoil.
 “Who is this?” people asked,
 And the crowds answered,
 “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

SILENCE (Betty)

Before the silence: I invite you to take your word or phrase into yourself. Repeat
 it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world. See what rises in you
 – a feeling.. a word... a prayer....

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.

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. I have a real sense of us at this moment as the body of Christ.

INTENTION (Suzie)

Let us pray together.

On this Palm Sunday, let us pray for the courage to walk the whole way of the cross with Jesus.

He lived this terrible week in the same way he lived the earlier years of his life: with absolute love that healed and never harmed others.

His love brought into human life
the endless, unearned love
with which God looks at every person
all the time.

Following this way of love is the path of our salvation.

If your phone or computer is muted, you can respond aloud with words from our Isaiah reading today: In you, Yahweh, we trust.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

(Suzie)

1. With the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and Catholic sisters, we feel the heartbreak of our world. We pray that we will be voice for people who are voiceless, and mend the gaps for people who are vulnerable. For this we pray. (Pause.)
In you, Yahweh, we trust.
2. For all those directly impacted by the coronavirus crisis, we pray. (Pause.)
In you, Yahweh, we trust.
3. For people who are in fear in these unsettled times, we pray. (Pause.)
In you, Yahweh, we trust.
4. For our families and those who are dear to us, we pray. (Pause.)
In you, Yahweh, we trust.
5. For the strength and wisdom we individually and collectively need for this time, we pray. (Pause.)
In you, Yahweh, we trust.
6. For leaders nearby and worldwide to act with wisdom and with care for the vulnerable, we pray. (Pause.)
In you, Yahweh, we trust.

7. For our Jewish brothers and sisters who begin their holy season of Passover Wednesday night – May we share with them the fullness of God's promise to save them, and walk with them trusting that our God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will lead us all through the dark night when death is all around us.
(Pause) In you, Yahweh, we trust.

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" or anything ending you want.

After "for this we pray": In you, Yahweh, we trust.

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 (Suzie)

Today we are not able to share in the physical
breaking of bread and sharing of the cup.
But we remember what we relive this week.
On the night before he died
the first thing Jesus did was to give thanks.
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.

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.

Whenever we eat or drink this week,
we can gratefully remember
our communion with God and with each other.
We can recognize that our meals are a 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 (Suzie)

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 (Suzie)

Our prayer today doesn't really come to an end.

All this week, we will walk with Jesus.

We will remember his disciple Judas going to the chief priests
and accepting 30 pieces of silver.

We will remember the aching love of Jesus' last supper.

He foresaw his betrayal and death, and he offered his entire life
in communion with those who love him.

We will be there in the garden, and in front of Pontius Pilate,
and all the hard, painful way up the hill
to crucifixion between two thieves.

And then, at the end, Jesus forgave those who killed him,
still able to look at everyone without exception
with loving eyes.

We close our prayer this morning with Reggie leading us in song.

CLOSING SONG: Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom. (Reggie)